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AN
HISTORICAL DISPLAY
OF THE
EFFECTS
OF
PHYSICAL AND MORAL CAUSES
ON THE
Character and Circumstances
OF
NATIONS:

INCLUDING A
COMPARISON OF THE ANCIENTS AND MODERNS IN REGARD
TO THEIR INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL STATE.

BY JOHN BIGLAND,

Author of "Letters on the Study of History," "History of Europe," &c.

"The proper study of Mankind is Man."—POPE.

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PREFACE.



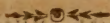
IN entering on the investigation of a subject so interesting as that which occupies the following pages, it would be useless to detain the reader on the threshold of inquiry ; for a good book seldom requires, and a worthless one never deserves a long preface. It may not, however, be amiss to premise, that in attempting to exhibit, in a luminous point of view, the causes which, in all ages, have influenced the state of nations, and produced their characteristic discriminations, the principles advanced by various authors, who have directly or indirectly treated these subjects, are here brought forward to distinct inspection. The materials which serve as the basis of this inquiry, are furnished by all that is known of human nature and social life. But the opinions

and assertions of historians, travellers, and political writers, being dispersed through numerous volumes, and often so much obscured by contradictions, that, without a critical examination, it is impossible to deduce from them any satisfactory conclusion, it is requisite to collect the scattered rays of light into a focus, in order to illumine one of the most interesting subjects of moral inquiry,—the nature and origin of those circumstances which occasion the diversity that is seen in the modifications of the human mind and the forms of national existence.

The eternal laws which determine the intellectual and social state of the different portions of the human species, have their existence in certain physical and moral causes, which, by their combinations or mutual counteraction, form the character and fix the destiny of nations. The operations of these causes I have endeavoured to investigate, by examining the nature of man, and to illustrate by examples from ancient and modern history. The investigation of a subject so complex, might, indeed, have been extended to a much greater length; but I have endeavoured to

exhibit the whole series of argument and illustration in the most condensed form; and instead of each train of reasoning being pursued to its last ramifications, something is left for the intellectual exercise of the reader, as the general principles which are advanced, will admit of an almost unlimited extent and variety of application. A comparison of the ancients and moderns will not be deemed an inappropriate conclusion to a work of this nature; and although the contrast is exhibited in a point of view very different from that in which it has been sometimes contemplated, judicious criticism will scarcely condemn the result of the discussion. On the whole it is presumed, that these considerations, on subjects so interesting, will not be found uninteresting or unentertaining to those who possess a taste for inquiry into the history of nations and of the human mind.

INTRODUCTION.



IN taking an extensive view of the human species in every period of its existence, we see its moral and intellectual form exhibiting, in different nations, communities, and professions, a distinctive appearance. This mental difference is not unfrequently accompanied by differences of physical qualities, which seem to distinguish particular races of men. A slight acquaintance with history, ancient and modern, suffices to shew that, in every age, from remote antiquity to the present day, some nations have far excelled others in courage, in bodily and mental vigour, in moral conduct, and intellectual attainments: and the aggregate of those qualities that appear to preponderate in different communities, is designated by the name of national character. As all men, in all nations, are of the same species, are

endowed with the same senses and feelings, and receive their perceptions and ideas through similar organs, the difference, whether physical or moral, that is observed in comparing different races or assemblages of men, can arise only from external and adventitious circumstances. The same observation is applicable to individuals; although the causes that influence their conduct are often so various and also so recondite as to render it impossible to make a just estimate of their operation. But the mode of thinking and acting pursued by bodies of men, is ever in conformity with general rules, capable of being reduced to a common standard, and assigned to definable causes.

Egregious errors are common in descriptions and estimates of national character. Its different colouring arises from causes of a general nature, originating from a particular state of society, and is totally distinct from any thing that proceeds from the passions or circumstances of individuals. In every age and country, the general principles of human nature are the same; and the diversified modes of human conduct, in the affairs of private

life, may be rather ascribed to individual than national circumstances. The different individuals of each country, therefore, display all the diversity of character that can be imagined ; and in every nation, brave men and cowards, wise men and fools, may be found. But the vague assertions of inconsiderate writers, and the credulity of ignorant readers have concurred to produce and to propagate an erroneous notion, that every individual has so strong a tinge of the character of the nation to which he belongs, as to be distinguishable from persons of a different country ; and what has been once said, has, for that very reason, been a thousand times repeated. According to these superficial observations of human nature, every Frenchman must be polite, but loquacious and volatile, every German intemperate, every Dutchman avaricious, every Spaniard grave, sullen, and haughty ; and to these might be added a long “*Et cœtera*,” of similar assertions, calculated to impose on the ignorant and to impress on the inexperienced mind erroneous ideas. So many foolish things, indeed, have been said, and so many sophisms repeated in regard to this subject, that a mul-

titudinous mass of observations and opinions must be examined, before a right judgment can be formed.

We have been taught to view the character of the ancient Romans, and that of the modern Italians, in a light very unfavourable to the latter, and, in some respects, not without reason, especially if we confine our retrospect to the first ages of the republic. Even in their state of corruption and degeneracy, the superiority of their tactics kept up, for a long time, the military reputation of the Romans; but all that could render them illustrious was confined to their armies, and they were more completely enslaved under the emperors than they have ever been under the popes. We cannot peruse the annals of Tacitus without perceiving, in almost every page, that no people were ever more degenerate than the Romans had become at so early a period as the reign of Tiberius. That emperor, in going to the senate house, was heard to say, "Devoted men how they rush headlong into bondage."* Tacitus, in depicting those times

* Tacit. Annal. lib. 3. cap. 65.

INTRODUCTION.

says, that "At Rome, all things tended to a state of abject servitude, consuls, senators, and Roman knights, contended, with emulation, who should be the most willing slaves. The higher each person's rank, the more he struggled for the foremost place in bondage."* Neither modern Italy nor any other country has ever exhibited a more disgusting picture.

Some writers affect to treat with contempt the character of the modern Italians as unwarlike and pusilanimous. But their division into a number of petty states, without any center of union, is the principal circumstance that prevents them from making a conspicuous figure on the military theatre: as individuals they have shewn themselves not inferior to any other people in the qualities requisite for a martial life. In the Belgic wars, the Italian regiments were ranked amongst the best troops that composed the armies of Don John, of Austria, and Alexander Farnese, prince of Parma. And at the memorable naval action of Lepanto, the Roman gallies, which led the van of the confederate fleet, displayed an enterprising intrepidity that would have done

* Tacit. Annal. lib. 1. cap. 7.—See also Plin. Epist. lib. 8. Epist. 14.

honour to Rome in the times of Scipio and
Cæsar.

National character is not to be estimated from isolated facts or temporary ebullitions. In England, the character of the French has generally been regarded as volatile and unsteady; but it must be remembered, that the English nation changed its religion four times in the space of twenty-one years, a circumstance which has no parallel in the history of France, or of any other country in the world. The great rebellion in the reign of Charles I. and the execution of that unfortunate monarch, impressed foreigners with a very unfavourable opinion of the character of the English nation. And the French, who not many years before the revolution, boasted with pride of their loyalty, used to call the English an unsteady and fickle people, whom no king could govern, and no religion could please. But how readily the French assumed the character which they had marked with so much reprobation and ridicule, and rushed into rebellion, atheism, and anarchy, while the English exhibited themselves the patrons and supporters of loyalty, religion, and social order!!

An observing and judicious traveller has remarked the fallacy of those notions relating to national character, which have long been current amongst the vulgar, who assert without proof, and believe without examination. "The observations I have made," says Kuittner, "in the countries through which I have travelled, in general contradict the characters of those nations commonly ascribed to them in books and conversation. Thus, for example, in the Spaniards, with whom I have been acquainted, I never could find the gravity and stiffness by which that nation is generally supposed to be distinguished. In the Frenchman I have seldom discovered that winning amiableness of disposition, and the high degree of politeness and delicacy inseparable from it, which are universally ascribed to him. I never observed that, in his own country, the Englishman was that melancholy, reserved, and gloomy being for which he is proverbial. The German is by no means the drunkard or the clownish uncivilized brute, that in many countries he is described to be. Am I to suppose that all the individuals with whom I was acquainted, were exceptions, and that the

observations of so many years were false? or may it not rather be asserted, that the characters of whole nations, as delineated in early works, from which they have got into every ones mouth, are incorrect? It is much easier to collect ideas of men and things from books than from real life; and it is inconceivable how notions once adopted, continue to be propagated for successive ages.”* Similar observations are made by Mr. A. Young, in speaking of the taciturnity of the French at their “Tables d’ hote.”† “I came,” says he, “to this kingdom, expecting to have my ears constantly fatigued with the infinite volubility and spirits of the people, of which so many persons have written, sitting, I suppose, at their English firesides.”‡

Nothing can be more just than these observations, to which might be adduced many others of a similar nature and tendency. And after all that can be said of the loquacity of Frenchmen, it is questionable whether in this as well as in volubility of speech, they are not

* Kuittner's Trav. Phil. Collect. vol. 1, p. 146.

† Ordinaries, or dinners at the inns.

‡ Young's Tour in France, July 27, 1757.

equalled by several other nations, and even, perhaps, by the English.* The trite observations on the gravity of the Spaniards, although so often repeated, are not less erroneous. Those who have seen their popular amusements in their towns, and especially among the peasantry, will not regard them as a people of a sullen, reserved, or gloomy character; and no one who has been a spectator of their animated dances, the Fandango and the Volero, will ever accuse them of a want of vivacity.

Dismissing the trite and groundless assertions which have been so long re-echoed by ignorant or prejudiced writers, and adopted without examination by credulous readers, we must be on our guard against all the farrago of misrepresentation produced by prejudice

* To those who happen to hear Frenchmen, or, indeed, any other foreigners converse, and do not understand their language, they appear to speak with extraordinary volubility. In regard to the French, this appears to be an effect of the pronunciation of their language, which does not, like the English, allow one fully accented syllable to drown, in a great measure, the sound of the others of which a word is composed. In the French language, almost every syllable being fully pronounced, seems a distinct word to the ear of a foreigner. But from some experiments which I have witnessed in reading an equal quantity of matter in the two languages, I am led to believe that, generally speaking, a Frenchman does not, in a given space of time, utter more words than an Englishman.

and ignorance. In order to form a just estimate, and to investigate the origin of that superiority in corporeal or mental qualities, which, in many instances, one nation undeniably possesses over another, we must consult the book of nature and the records of history; and like persons placed on a commanding elevation, take a perspicuous and penetrating view of the widely extended prospect around us. We must contemplate the principles of human nature, and the diversified modes of human feeling and action. But in this interesting inquiry, the elements that are to be taken into consideration are so numerous, so diversified, and sometimes so contradictory, that many of the most material must always be overlooked by persons of ordinary information; and some may escape the attention of men accustomed to wider survey and more accurate investigation. "Sudden changes," says Vattel, "strike the imaginations of men: we write histories of them and unfold their causes; but we neglect the changes that insensibly happen by a long train of steps that are but little observed."* In attempting

* Vattel's Law of Nations, p. 29.

to discuss a subject of so complex and intricate a nature, it is requisite to bring forward to distinct inspection and critical examination, a numerous assemblage of facts and circumstances, and a vast collection of evidence and observations. Scattered rays when collected into a focus, shed a strong and clear light on the point which they are directed to illuminate.

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CHAP. I.

GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION.

PHYSICAL circumstances must have had an influence on man before moral causes could operate or even exist, as the latter originate from human actions and institutions, but the former are coeval with nature itself. While man was in his primeval state, before the species was divided into different communities and nations, distinguished by various laws, languages, and creeds, no difference could be produced in the human character by political systems and religious tenets, which had then no existence.

Of all the physical circumstances that can affect national character, as well as national prosperity, geographical position and topographical situation may claim the first rank. After a nation has once attained to a certain degree of civilization and improvement, other causes acquire a predominance in modelling

its character and fixing its destinies ; but local circumstances have the first share in the combined operation ; and although often counteracted by social institutions and political events, they can never entirely lose their influence. Dr. Adam Smith has observed, that the nations which first became conspicuous by their civilization, were those which dwelt round the Mediterranean. And Dr. Johnson, in speaking of the coasts of that sea, made the following remark : “ On these shores,” said he, “ were the four great empires of the world,—the Assyrian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. All our religion, almost all our laws, almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean.”

The early civilization of the nations around the Mediterranean, was, undoubtedly, owing to the easy communication which it afforded. Their situation induced them to direct their attention to nautical affairs ; and the facility of intercourse suggested the ideas of commerce. A reciprocal exchange of commodities encouraged the cultivation of their soil, and promoted the invention and diffusion of various arts and conveniences. Colonies from Egypt settled amongst the savage aborigines of Greece, and introduced into that region the rudiments of letters and laws, of social insti-

tutions, and useful sciences. The Greeks made a rapid progress in civilization, and disseminated its comforts and conveniences in the neighbouring countries. Grecian colonies were, in process of time, established in Italy and Sicily, and at Marseilles, in Gaul: they were even extended to the southern, eastern, and northern shores of the Euxine, to Sinope, and Trebisonde, and to the coasts of Colchis, and the Taurican Chersonesus. While Greece thus poured her colonies and transfused her arts into the countries on the north of the Mediterranean, the Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon carried the same spirit of discovery and commerce along its southern shores, and even beyond the Pillars of Hercules, as far as the island of Britain. Carthage, the future rival of Rome, was founded by a Tyrian colony, and at length eclipsed the splendour of the parent state. Thus the Mediterranean, by affording an easy intercourse to the nations situated around its shores, appears to have been the first, although not the only cause of their early civilization. The nations of modern Europe derive equal benefits from their inland seas. The Baltic, another vast lake or basin, affords the same advantages to the people of the north, as the Mediterranean offers to those of the south; and both these inland seas contribute, in no small degree, to

the superiority which Europe has acquired over the other quarters of the globe.

• When we cast our eyes over the map of the old continent, we cannot but perceive the disadvantages under which both Asia and Africa lie, from the want of such inlets as the Mediterranean and the Baltic seas. Had the interior parts of Asia and Africa, instead of the immense wastes of Tartary, which occupy the middle of the former, and the burning sands of Zaara, which overspread the central regions of the latter, been intersected by extensive gulphs, like the Mediterranean and the Baltic, facilitating the intercourse between the nations situated near their shores, not only the physical, but also the moral aspect of these vast continents would have been widely different from what it, at present, appears.* Tartary, and the southern parts of Siberia, might, perhaps, have equalled Sweden, European Russia, Prussia, and Germany, in arts and arms, in

* The Mediterranean lays all the south of Europe, the north of Africa, and the Ottoman dominions in the south-western part of Asia, open to navigation and commerce; and the Baltic affords the same advantages to Sweden, Prussia, and the western part of Russia. The great rivers, Oder and Vistula, which fall into the Baltic, open a trade into the interior of eastern Germany and Poland. But central Africa is totally destitute of rivers, except the Niger, which, losing itself in the swamps of Wangara, can be of little use to navigation and commerce; and the same remark may be made on the great rivers of Siberia, which, falling into the Frozen Ocean, can open no communication with other countries.

force and wealth ; while central Africa might possibly have exhibited, in countries hitherto untrodden by the foot of any European, nations as famous as the Greeks and the Romans.* An Athens or a Rome might, in this case, have occupied the site of Tombuctoo and Houssa. Our imagination may conceive a general, and even a just idea of the advantages or disadvantages of different situations ; but their effects cannot be precisely ascertained by the most minute and accurate calculation.

Although geographical and topographical circumstances may well be supposed to have a very considerable share in giving the first direction to the pursuits of collective bodies of men, the records both of ancient history and modern discovery, contribute to shew, that, in process of time, their influence is often counteracted, and sometimes extinguished, by moral causes, and incidents. The favourable situation of Great Britain, has greatly contributed to render her the chief commercial and maritime empire on the face of the globe ; but, during several centuries, the kings of the

* These are mentioned only as suppositions not wholly improbable ; but their probability, and even their possibility, will be called in question by those who regard the genius of the Greeks as the effect of their beautiful country and agreeable climate, so different from the level and uniform tracts of the Siberian and African deserts, and the extremes of heat and cold that prevail in those regions.

Plantagenet race, directing all their view to the preservation or extension of their continental dominions, her natural advantages were neglected; and it was not till the reign of Elizabeth, that her trade and marine began to make a conspicuous figure. But the Romans exhibit the most remarkable instance of a civilized nation neglecting, in every period of its existence, the advantages of a commercial situation. Although Rome was situated within sixteen miles of the Mediterranean sea, her citizens, during several ages, never directed their attention to nautical or mercantile affairs. This was owing to her political system. War was the chief, and almost the only political concern of the Roman republic: conquest and dominion were its principal objects: the camp and the forum were the only sources of honour and distinction. These considerations gave to the citizens of Rome a peculiar train of ideas and pursuits: their minds acquired a determined bias towards the arts of war and eloquence; and they never once thought of enriching themselves by commercial speculations, which they regarded as mean and inglorious. The first attempt of the Romans, in the arts of ship-building and navigation, were made in order to render them subservient to war, during their severe contest with the Carthaginians; and, in the most

flourishing ages of the republic and the empire, Rome was never commercial. Almost the whole trade of the Roman dominions was carried on by provincial merchants; and the imperial city itself, when in the height of its splendour and luxury, received its supplies through the same medium. Under the papal dominion, causes of a different nature have prevented the Romans from applying to trade. The church has always been considered as the source of honour and wealth; and ecclesiastical preferment has been the chief object and aim of enterprising activity. Architecture, painting, and sculpture, have been greatly encouraged by the popes; and, with the finest models of antiquity before their eyes, the modern Romans have excelled in those arts. But, under the papal government, navigation and commerce have not met with the same encouragement; and the people of Rome shew little inclination for such pursuits. Thus, the most celebrated, and once the largest and most opulent city of the world, has ever been one of the least commercial.

But besides the great features of situation, which, if not strongly counteracted, are calculated to produce decided effects, there are other local circumstances of an inferior nature, and a less striking appearance, which have no inconsiderable influence on the state and cha-

racter of nations. Dr. Smith observes, that of all the countries in which civilization made the most early appearance and the most rapid progress, Egypt seems to have been the first in which either agriculture or manufactures were improved to any considerable degree,—a circumstance which he ascribes to the inland navigation of the Nile. This conjecture is far from being improbable. The benefits of inland navigation are too obvious to admit of a doubt, or to require either proof or illustration by argument. And it may be presumed, that its advantages would be perceived in an early period of society, as men would naturally be inclined to practise the navigation of rivers, before they ventured to commit their safety to the turbulent waves of a wide and tempestuous sea.

Local circumstances, besides their effects in promoting or retarding commercial intercourse, and the progress of civilization, have also a direct influence on the minds and manners of men. Gloomy and cheerless countries will generally give a corresponding tinge to the character of their inhabitants. In the Highlands of Scotland and the Hebrides or Western Isles, the people have ever been remarkable for a gloomy and superstitious cast of mind, arising from the nature and aspect of their country; of which the prominent

GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION.

features are lofty mountains, and rocky and lonely recesses, woods overhanging frightful precipices, lakes intersected with castled promontories, and extensive solitudes of uncultivated and almost untrodden country, interspersed with nameless ruins,—scenes resembling those represented in some of the landscapes of Salvator Rosa.* The impressions made on the mind in such situations, are those of melancholy seclusion and primeval simplicity. The romantic ideas attached to their ancient traditions, and the tales that relate the exploits of their chiefs, in former ages, carry back the minds of their present inhabitants to the times of remote antiquity, and impress on them images closely connected with feudal manners and extinguished hostilities. These ideas are nourished by the peculiarities of their present condition: their pastoral life in summer, and their contracted sphere of action in the winter, limited to a scanty society within the gloomy precincts of their narrow vallies, surrounded by mountains covered with clouds and fogs, or drenched with rains, and repeating, in various echoes, the scream of wild fowl and the roar of the

* Salvator Rosa was born A. D. 1615, near Naples, and died at Rome A. D. 1673. In his youth, he was captain of a gang of banditti, who lived in the recesses of the mountains; and those rugged scenes, among which he had passed so many years, are supposed to have given a corresponding cast to his paintings.

cataract. Every thing in such a situation contributes to give a superstitious and melancholy cast to the mind. "Objects like these," says Dr. Beattie, "diffuse a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occasional and social merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a native in the hour of silence and solitude."*

The same superstitious and gloomy cast of mind is also observable amongst the inhabitants of the Isle of Man. A modern writer says, that the superstitions of the Manks must be imputed to a native melancholy, nourished by indolence and heightened by the wild, solitary, and romantic scenes, in the midst of which they pass their lives. A Manksman, amidst his lonely mountains, reclines by some romantic stream, the murmuring of which lulls him into a pleasing torpor. Half slumbering, he sees a variety of imaginary beings, which he supposes to be real. Sometimes they may resemble his traditionary ideas of fairies; and sometimes they may assume the appearance of his friends or his neighbours, attending some nuptial or funeral solemnity. The predominant trait in the Manks' character, is indolence. Great numbers of the people gain their livelihood by fishing; and as the fishery lasts

* Dr. Beattie on Poetry and Music, p. 169.

only three months, many of them lie nearly idle the remaining part of the year. From whatever cause this hereditary inactivity may originally spring, its influence is certainly strengthened by the tranquil solitude of the lonely vales and mountainous recesses to which the greater part of the inhabitants are accustomed from their infancy.* The inhabitants of the towns are, in some degree, exempt from these evils. Society promotes activity; and activity expels from the mind the clouds of superstition and illusion.

Superstition, of one kind or other, is natural to the human mind, till its clouds are dispelled by the light of reason and philosophy; but it assumes very different appearances from the diversity of climate, of scenery, and of social institutions. The superstitions of the Irish, the Scotch, and the Welch, and, in general, of all northern nations, if not corrected by moral causes, are of a gloomy and melancholy cast; while the minds of the people in more southern climes, and amidst more delightful and enlivening scenery, receive more agreeable impressions, and the world of imagination assumes a more brilliant appearance. Several writers suppose that the elegant forms of the Greek superstitions, must

* For the indolence and superstitious disposition of the Manks, see Robertson's Tour to the Isle of Man, in the year 1791.

be attributed to the beautiful and variegated aspect of their country, where every mountain, valley, and grove—every fountain and river—was supposed to be inhabited by invisible deities. To these circumstances may probably be ascribed, the brilliant imagination of their poets. “The Mediterranean,” says a learned and sentimental traveller, “placed in the centre of the civilized world, studded with smiling islands, and washing shores planted with the myrtle, the palm, and the olive, instantly reminds the spectator of that sea, which gave birth to Apollo, to the Nereids, and to Venus; whereas, the ocean, deformed by tempests and surrounded by unknown regions, was well calculated to be the cradle of the phantoms of Scandinavia.*”

* Chateaubriant's Travels, 1. p. 65.

CHAP. II.

CLIMATE.

ON the effects of climate, much has been said by geographers, travellers, historians, and natural philosophers; but there is scarcely, perhaps, any subject that has given rise to a greater variety of erroneous observations, and of vague and contradictory assertions. That the dispositions and characters of mankind are varied according to the climate, has long been almost a general supposition; nor can it be doubted, that, when the difference is in the extreme, its influence must be considerable. The Laplander, like his climate, is dull, gloomy, and cold: the African, and the southern Asiatic, under the influence of an ardent sun, are fiery, sensual, and vindictive. Here the views are taken in the strongest point of contrast; and, when this is the case, the general observation will be found just with few exceptions. Some writers, however,

among whom the chief are Helvetius, Hume, and Sismundi, deny that physical causes, such as air or climate, heat or cold, have any influence on the genius of man and the character of nations. Helvetius very justly observes, that "when we look into history, we see nations change their characters on a sudden, without any change in the nature of their climates, or in their nourishment.*

It is not to be doubted, that the nature of government, religion, political events, and other moral causes, which will be hereafter investigated, have the greatest and most decided effects on the human character; but, notwithstanding the plausible, and, in many respects, rational arguments of those writers, it seems, that man owes much of his bodily temperament, and some portion of his mental qualities, to mere physical causes. "The climate," says Chateaubriant, "operates more or less upon the taste of nations. In Greece, for instance, a suavity, a softness, a repose, pervade all nature, as well as the works of the ancients. You may almost conceive, as it were by intuition, why the architecture of the Parthenon has such exquisite proportions, why ancient sculpture is so unaffected, so tranquil, so simple, when you have beheld the pure sky

* Helvetius's Treatise on Man, vol. 2. p. 9.

and the delicious scenery of Athens, of Corinth, and of Ionia. In this native land of the muses, nature suggests no wild deviations: she tends, on the contrary, to dispose the mind to the love of the uniform and the harmonious.* Dr. Russell ascribes the early proficiency of the Ionians or Asiatic Greeks, in the liberal arts, and in all the works depending on imagination and sentiment, partly to moral, and partly to physical causes,—to the long period of peace and prosperity which they had enjoyed, first in a state of independency, and afterwards under the protection of the Lydian monarchs,—and to a country and climate calculated to awaken and to foster all the powers of genius. “The Ionian cities,” where the elegant arts were most successfully cultivated, “are more commodiously and happily situated,” says Herodotus, “than any other that we know; for they are neither chilled with cold, rendered damp by rain, nor exposed to the excesses of heat and drought.”† In this fine climate, and in a country beautifully diversified with hills and vallies, intersected by rivers, indented by bays, and constantly refreshed with gales from the numerous isles that crown the Egean sea; the Asiatic Greeks were favoured with the gayest and the

* Chateaubriant's Travels, p. 71.

† Herodot. lib. 1.

grandest views of nature, attended by every circumstance that can excite or cherish the human faculties. Genius, however, is said to be the produce of every clime; and so indeed it is. "But the richest growths and fairest shoots of genius, spring from the happiest exposition and the most friendly soil.*" Here we see the French traveller, and the English historian, coinciding in the opinion, that the delicious climate and scenery of Greece, the Egean Isles, and Ionia, greatly contributed to the first dawning of Grecian genius.

That this might, in some degree, be the case, is a supposition extremely probable; as a fine climate and beautiful scenery must produce pleasing sensations and excite agreeable ideas. But some writers have carried these speculations much farther, and pretended to calculate the effects of climate on the human imagination, with as much exactness as if the degrees of genius were to be measured by the degrees of latitude. According to this hypothesis of ascribing genius solely to the warmth of the sun, and the influence of the atmosphere, L'Abbé du Bos, Winkleman, and several others, assert, that the English are situated too far to the north to produce any of those vigorous and brilliant exertions of fancy, dis-

* Dr. Russell's Ancient Hist. vol. 1; and his quotation from Blackwell's Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, sec. 1.

played in the more southern regions of Greece and Italy. But the futility of these suppositions has been completely exposed by an eminent author and artist, who has proved, that, in England, the progress of the fine arts has been impeded, not by frigidity of climate or of imagination, but by various politico-religious causes, much more inimical to the growth of refinement and taste, than any combination of physical circumstances.*

No person can be ignorant that climate has a visible influence on every animated being. Nature has adapted different species of animals to different latitudes: the African lion would inevitably perish under the polar circle; and the bear of the arctic regions would sink beneath the heats of the torrid zone. Man is the only creature that is able to exist in every climate from the equator to the poles. This capability, however, he derives not from the structure of his corporeal frame, but from his mental faculties, which enable him to invent a variety of artificial means of securing his body against the inclemency of atmospheric influence.† Man, therefore, is subject to the

* Vide Barry's Inquiry into the real and imaginary Obstructions to the Advancement of the Arts in England. London, 1775.

† Without clothing and other artificial means of resisting the inclemencies of the atmosphere, it is questionable whether man could exist in as many different climates as the dog and the swine.

operation of the same physical causes, as every other animated being ; but his intellectual powers and social circumstances enable him, in a considerable degree, to counteract their effects.

When it is fully granted that climate must have a certain influence both on the mental and corporeal frame of man, the philosophical inquirer will still find a difficulty in ascertaining the mode of its operation, and the effects which it tends to produce. That the atmosphere has a very powerful influence on the corporeal frame of man, we have convincing proofs in the different degrees of salubrity of different places, and in the different diseases endemial in certain countries. In some extreme cases, it appears to have a similar influence on the faculties and powers of the mind. Of this, nature affords a striking instance in the frequent occurrence of idiocy in the Val-lais, or Pais de Vaud, adjoining to the south-western part of Switzerland. In this district, idiots are, beyond all comparison, more numerous than in any other part of the world of equal extent ; and most of them exhibit a spectacle of more complete mental imbecility, than such persons commonly do in any other country. Great numbers of them are deaf and dumb, their stature seldom exceeds four feet and a half, and they always die very

young. These unfortunate beings, who are here called Cretins, seem therefore to be as defective in their corporeal powers, as in their intellectual faculties. That there must be some physical cause of this dreadful singularity, is certain; and that it is peculiar to the country, is evident from this remarkable circumstance,—that a family, coming from a distant place to reside in this district, has, in a few years, to lament that idiocy amongst its offspring to which it before was a stranger; while those who remove from the Vallais, soon find themselves happy in the cessation of so deplorable a misfortune. This physical cause can scarcely be any thing else than the nature of the air. The district is a vast bason full of the copious exhalations which arise from the Rhone, and the marshes adjoining to that river; and the surrounding mountains, which rise almost perpendicular, preventing the dispersion of these vapours, create an atmosphere singular for its humidity and heat.* It seems, therefore, that the nature of the air is the primary cause of the idiocy so unhappily prevalent in the Vallais. Its operation, however, appears to be confined to particular constitutions; for, although corporeal and mental

* Sir R. Clayton's paper Mem. Manchester Society, vol. 3. Cox's Travels in Switzerland, l. p. 384, &c.

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courage by constantly impressing on their minds a sense of their inferiority.

Thunberg agrees in opinion with Orme respecting the enervating power of a hot climate. "The inhabitants of the warmer climates," says that traveller, "have a dull and torpid brain, and are less acute and penetrating than the Europeans. They have the power of thinking, but not profoundly."—"They are in general idle, sleepy, and lascivious. To these qualities the heat of the climate inclines them. And without insulting the greater part of the dark brown inhabitants of the East Indies, one may truly say, that there is a greater difference between them and the Europeans, than between the monkies and them." And again, "the heat of the climate has such an influence on the Europeans who arrive here, that in time, they become heavy, inactive, and less lively than they were in the colder climates; so that the most industrious man, against his inclination, frequently sinks into a state of inactivity and idleness."* Thunberg agrees with all other travellers respecting the insalubrious and enervating air of Batavia; but he also observes that the Europeans in that settlement with few exceptions, live in a very irregular and intem-

* Thunberg's Trav. v. 2. p. 296—297.

perate manner, spending most of their time in luxurious feasts and entertainments.* Such a mode of living has in every country a strong tendency to enervate both the body and the mind; but in the sultry atmosphere of Batavia, situated amidst pestilential morasses under a tropical climate, the effects must be extremely pernicious, especially to the natives of a temperate zone.

The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, seems to ascribe the effeminacy of the Syrians to the warmth of their climate.† But in speaking of Julian's expedition against Persia, he says, "The hardy veterans accustomed to the cold climate of Germany, fainted under the sultry heat of an Assyrian summer."‡ The same eloquent, but often obscure and contradictory writer, says, "It is difficult to ascertain and easy to exaggerate the influence of the climate of ancient Germany over the minds and bodies of the natives. Many writers have supposed, and most have allowed, though, as it should seem without any adequate proof, that the rigorous cold of the north was favourable to long life and generative vigour, that the women were more fruitful, and the human species more prolific than

* Thunberg ubi supra.

† Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 4. ch. 26. p. 144.

‡ Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 4. ch. 26. p. 195.

in warmer or more temperate climates. We may assert with greater confidence, that the keen air of Germany formed the large and masculine limbs of the natives, who were in general of a more lofty stature than the people of the south, gave them a kind of strength better adapted to violent exertions than to patient labour, and inspired them with constitutional bravery, which is the result of nerves and spirits. The severity of a winter campaign, that chilled the courage of the Romans, was scarcely felt by these hardy children of the north, who, in their turn, were unable to resist the summer heats, and dissolved away in languor and sickness under the beams of an Italian sun.”* All that can here be gathered from Gibbon’s assertion is, that the Romans could endure heat better than cold, and that the Germans could bear cold better than heat, or in other words, that each found the climate to which they had been accustomed from infancy, the most suitable to their bodily temperament. The Romans, however, as Mr. Gibbon is obliged to acknowledge, made war in all climates, and yet were preserved in health and vigour, a circumstance which he ascribes to their excellent discipline.† The same writer

* Gibbon’s *Dec. Rom. Emp.* vol. 1. ch. 9. p. 348.

† Gibbon’s *Dec. Rom. Emp.* marginal note, *ubi supra*.

tells us, that in the reign of Augustus, the Roman generals having attempted the conquest of Arabia Fœlix, and Ethiopia, their troops were unable to bear the heat of the climate. "They marched near a thousand miles to the south of the tropic ; but the heat of the climate soon repelled the invaders, and protected the unwarlike natives of those sequestered regions."* Gibbon seems here to rely on the obscure geography of Pliny, and the inaccurate accounts of Dion Cassius. In later times, however, we find that the heats of the torrid zone have not, either in Asia, Africa, or America, arrested the progress of European discoverers, colonists, or conquerors.

When historians so frequently mention the "hardy sons of the north," an expression which, from being so often repeated, is become almost proverbial, they seem to insinuate that the Goths and Germans, and other inhabitants of those parts of Europe that are situated to the north of the Danube, were of a firmer texture of body, and had stronger nerves than the people of Italy and the other countries that composed the Roman empire. This also appears to have been the opinion of the Romans themselves, who being enervated by luxury and not by the warmth of their climate, which

* Dec. Rom. Emp. v. 1. ch. 1, p. 3.

remained the same in the reign of Honorius as it had been in the age of Scipio and Cæsar, endeavoured to palliate their own degeneracy and cover the disgrace of their multiplied defeats, by exaggerating the personal strength and ferocious courage of their enemies. But these notions, which originated from fear, were contradicted by the evidence of facts. Mr. Gibbon, in speaking of the Gothic prisoners distributed in the cities of the east, by the Emperor Valens, observes, that the Roman provincials were soon familiarized with their savage appearance, and ventured by degrees to measure their own strength in wrestling and other athletic exercises, with those formidable adversaries, whose name had so long inspired them with terror.* He also subjoins in a note in the next page, on the authority of Eunapius, that the provincials on becoming familiar with these northern barbarians found that their strength was more apparent than real. They were tall of stature; but their legs were clumsy and their shoulders were narrow.

Were it not necessary to guard against a fault too common among historians and travellers, that of improving extraordinary facts and incidents into general laws, and admitting them as a basis of reasoning and opinion, some

* Dec. Rom. Emp. *ibid.*

stress might be laid on the exploit of Basil, the Macedonian, who afterwards reigned over the eastern or Bizantine empire; and also on the story related by Herodotus, concerning the muscular strength of an Ethiopian emperor. Basil, when only a domestic, overthrew with ease, at the first onset, a famous barbarian wrestler, who had challenged the boldest and most robust of the Greeks.* The venerable father of history tells us, that Cambyses meditating the conquest of Ethiopia, sent ambassadors to the king or emperor with rich presents and strong professions of friendship, for the concealed purpose of discovering the state of the country. But the Ethiopian monarch, suspecting some hostile design, presented them with a bow, which he bended and drew in their presence, saying, tell the King of Persia, that the King of Ethiopia gives him this warning, "When the Persians can as easily draw so strong a bow, Cambyses may make war on the Ethiopians."† The prince who exhibited this extraordinary instance of personal strength, reigned in one of the hottest climates in the world.

These facts, however, if we admit their authenticity, are of too insulated a nature to

* Gibbon's Dec. Rom. Emp. v. 9. chap. 48. p. 50. For the extraordinary adventures, and the fortunate elevation of Basil, the Macedonian, see Gibbon *ubi supra*.

† Herodot. lib. 3. chap. 21.

be considered as proofs of any general theory ; for there are few countries or climates that have not produced some men of extraordinary power either of body or mind. But in transferring our views from individual instances to national characteristics, we shall find that the Abyssinians, the Galli, and other nations of central Africa, which the ancients designated by the name of Ethiopia, are strong, courageous, and extremely ferocious. The negroes of Guinea are also robust, and able to endure great fatigue. And, although all these nations are situated in the hottest regions within the torrid zone, it does not appear that their bodies are relaxed or their powers impaired by the heat of the climate. Unfeeling avarice long endeavoured to propagate and establish an opinion, that the unfortunate negroes were beings of an inferior class, formed by nature, and designed by providence, for a state of perpetual slavery. But the dictates of christianity, and the penetration of an enlightened age, have exploded a position so injurious to human nature. A judicious and observing writer, speaking of the negroes says, " Their orators, who speak in their palaces, are in general men who have passed the prime of life ; but they are often very successful in exciting the passions, by their bold and figurative language, which flows in torrents and is sometimes such as would not disgrace an

eastern poet.”* The constitution of Hayti, published in 1805, is no unfavourable specimen of the abilities of the negroes; and amongst them, numerous instances might be adduced of individual proficiency in science and literature. The enterprising and unfortunate Mungo Park gives an interesting and very favourable account of the industry and activity of the negroes, and of their dexterity in many useful arts;† and M. Gregoire, in his memoir, very justly observes, “That their vices are the effects of tyranny: but their virtues are their own.”

Writers of distinguished reputation not unfrequently make use of arguments and assertions, which are calculated rather to invite assent by their plausibility, than to produce conviction by evidence. Dr. Robertson has filled a hundred and fifty pages with his elaborate investigation of the character of the American savages, in which he exerts all his eloquence to establish his favourite theory, that heat of climate causes pusillanimity, while cold has a contrary effect.‡ But, in regard to the Caribbees, a fierce and courageous race of men, he finds himself obliged to make an exception. All writers consider

* Winterbottom's Account of the Africans of Sierra Leone, p. 217—218.

† Park's Travels in Africa *ferè passim*.

‡ History of America, vol. 2. b. 4

them as a tribe from the continent of America; and they themselves have a tradition that they originally came from Guiana. The Doctor, however, in order to make facts coincide with his theory, supposes them to have originated from the far more distant country of Florida, although this conjecture is in direct opposition to their own traditions, as well as to all geographical appearances.* He is also obliged to confess, that some nations in Brazil were no less eminent for vigour of mind and bravery in war; and, in a note, he quotes Lery, who had been an eye witness of the courage and ferocity of the Toupinambos, a Brazilian tribe. "These people," says Lery, "are so fierce and courageous, that, as long as the least remains of strength are left, they fight without ceasing, and never take refuge in flight.†" In fine, examples of the courage and ferocity of the nations of the torrid zone are so numerous, and so well attested, as to wholly invalidate Dr. Robertson's conclusions in regard to the influence of climate on the corporeal and mental faculties of man.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the insinuations so frequently thrown out by historians, and the theories framed by physiologists, it is far

* Vide note xcvi. Robertson's History of America, vol. 2.

† Vide Latin quotation from Lery, note lxix. Robertson's History of America, vol. 2.

from being a truth that heat of climate, without the concurrence of other, and more powerful causes, enervates the body. It even appears, that the people of the southern parts of Europe, are equal, if not superior, to those of the more northern countries in the firmness of their corporeal frame. This assertion will scarcely be credited without irrefragable proof; but unexceptionable evidence may be easily adduced; and, indeed, it presents itself from every quarter. A judicious traveller observes, that the Spaniards and Portuguese can bear a surprising degree of heat, cold, and fatigue; that the southern Europeans are not weak or effeminate; but that they are, perhaps, more enterprising and persevering than the inhabitants of the north.* To the testimony of a writer so unprejudiced, and so capable of judging, may be added that of many British officers, who have witnessed the hardships and privations to which the Spanish armies were exposed in the early stage of their late contest with France.† Arabia is situated under the tropic of Cancer: half of the country is within the torrid zone; and the heat of its climate is greater than in most of the regions nearer the

* Professor Link's Travels, p. 129.

† Sir J. Moore's Campaign in Spain, p. 71, 72, and 75. Colonel Syme's Letter to Sir D. Baird, dated Leon, Dec. 14, 1808. Neal's Letters from Spain and Portugal; Letter 33. p. 202.—35, p. 212.

equater. It exceeds, in almost a sevenfold proportion, the extent of the whole island of Great Britain; but the far greater part is desert. In this dreary waste, a boundless level of sand is sometimes intersected by sharp and naked mountains; and the face of the desert, without shade or shelter, is scorched by the intense rays of an almost vertical sun. The winds often diffuse a noxious, and even deadly vapour; and the sands, when put in motion, have buried whole caravans. Water is so scarce that it is often an object of contest. The country is entirely destitute of any thing like a navigable river, if we except the Euphrates, which washes its north-eastern limits, and wood is not less scarce than water.* A shady grove, a green pasture, a spring, or a stream of water, are sufficient to attract a colony of Arabs to the fortunate spot which

* Dr. Vincent thinks that Arabia deserta is not quite so barren as is generally represented. He founds his opinion on the consideration of the swarms furnished by its tribes in the early period of the Mahomedan conquests, and of every Arabian being a horseman. Vide Dr. Vincent's *Periplus of the Erih. Sea*, part 2, p. 268. But the Arabian armies, under Mahomed and his immediate successors, were not very numerous; and the first Caliphs extended their conquests less by their number than by the enthusiasm of their troops, till at length the inhabitants of the conquered countries, having embraced the islam, began to list under their banners. As the desert part of Arabia is at least four times as extensive as the whole island of Great Britain, if only a hundredth part of that extent consist of fertile spots, it might still contain a considerable population, especially as the Arabians are very abstemious.

can afford nourishment for themselves and their cattle. Yet in these dreary regions, the Arabians were at all times remarkable for their activity, courage, and contempt of death, as well as for their natural genius and vivid imagination.* The parching heat of the climate had not impaired either their bodily or mental powers. As soon as their different tribes were collected under one head, they displayed a valour in war seldom equalled by any other nation; and as soon as their empire was completely established, their progress in knowledge was not less remarkable. But political events have reduced them to the disorganized and barbarous state in which they were before the appearance of Mahomed.

A late traveller, in his descriptions of Germany, and of the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary, has entered into various inquiries relating to the influence of climate, and the state of the southern and northern nations in ancient and modern times; and in the comparison of their beauty, their strength, and their intellects, his decision is entirely in favour of the inhabitants of the south. "That ideal beauty," says the Baron de Reisbeck,

* Sale's Koran Prelim. Disc. p. 40. Sir W. Jones's Dissert. p. 4. D'Herbelot Bibliott. Orient. p. 120. And Gagnier Vie de Mahomed Tom. 1. p. 37. Sephadias ap. Pocock Specim. p. 161, &c.

“which dances before the eyes of our artists, though it so often vanishes under their pencils, was certainly never taken from Germany. All the human figures you meet with between this place and the northern seas, are so far from possessing it, that there are no lines of it to be discovered amongst them. You would in vain look for a girl’s body resembling the Grecian model. There are, it is true, faces enough with very soft strokes in them; but they all want the Greek profile and spirit; nor has the fine white flesh the firmness inseparable from a truly fine form.”

“In the lower parts on the Elbe and the Weser, you see, indeed, some snowy bosoms, and some lilly and rosy cheeks; but they soon vanish when the girls have once passed their bloom; and the whole is so flat and lifeless, that you cannot give it the name of a fine form. Even among the Saxons, the fairest creatures under the sun, that are not Grecians,* you seldom meet with a face which has any appearance of ideal beauty; and yet these are in the north, what the women of Florence are in the south, and far exceed all their country women in life and spirit.”

* The Baron de Reisheck, or rather his translator, here seems to speak of beauty of feature, and countenance, and not solely of fairness of complexion, in which it must be presumed, that the Germans have always equalled or even excelled the Greeks.

“The men of the north are equally destitute of ideal beauty. Winkleman himself thinks that better models, for the study of male beauty, are to be met with in Naples and Sicily, than amongst his countrymen, the Saxons, although they are, without any comparison, the handsomest of the northern nations.”

It is not, however, impossible that the Baron de Reisbeck may deceive himself in a comparison between the beauty of the Germans and that of the Greeks, in estimating the former by real nature, and the latter by the works of ancient art. The fine imagination and the exquisite judgment of the Grecian artists, had invented an ideal standard of beauty, appropriated to each object, and expressive of its attributes; and the statues of their gods and their heroes, were formed after models existing in the mind of the sculptor, rather than from any pattern afforded by nature. M. de Chateaubriant says, “The women of Athens were never celebrated for beauty.” And as a proof of this assertion, he adds, “That all the most illustrious personages of that city, Pericles, Sophocles, Socrates, Aristotle, and the divine Plato, were attached to foreign females.* Experience, however, affords numerous proofs, that in the passion of

* Chateaubriant's Trav. in Greece, &c. v. 1. p. 222

love, and the estimate of beauty, no stress can be laid on the caprice of individuals, however distinguished by talents or exalted in rank. But without adopting the very questionable opinion that Athens was deficient in female beauty, we may safely doubt, whether the whole range of Attica, Ionia, and the Egean isles, could have afforded a model for the Medicean Venus.

It is difficult to assign the real cause of that beauty which a celebrated English traveller considers as peculiar to the females of Cyprus. The climate he describes, not only as excessively hot, but also extremely insalubrious.* Yet he says, "The women of Cyprus are handsomer than those of any other Grecian island. They have a taller and more stately figure; and the features, particularly those of the women of Nicosia, are regular and dignified, exhibiting that elevated cast of countenance so universally admired in the works of Grecian artists. At present, this kind of beauty seems peculiar to the women of Cyprus: the sort of expression exhibited by one set of features, may be traced with different gradations in them all. Hence were possibly derived those celebrated models of female beauty, conspicuous in the statues,

* Dr. Clarke's Trav. part 2. p. 309, 310, 311, and 312. Mariti, however, says, that the air of Cyprus is exceedingly healthful. Mariti's Trav. v. 1. p. 6.

vases, medals, and gems, of Greece; models selected from the throng of Cyprian virgins who as priestesses of Venus, officiated at the Paphian 'shrine.'* Dr. Clarke, however, advances this only as a possibility: and it is extremely probable, that in the works of the Grecian artists, the beauty of those real models might be improved by the help of a fine imagination. It must here be observed, that the beauty of the Cypriots cannot arise either from their physical circumstances, or from the comforts of their political situation. Dr. Clarke gives this concise, but pathetic description of the state of their country:—"Agriculture neglected,—inhabitants oppressed,—population destroyed,—pestiferous air,—contagion,—poverty,—indolence,—desolation."† And he says the oppressions are so great, and the emigrations or rather flights, are so frequent, that "The population of all Cyprus scarcely exceeds sixty thousand persons, a number formerly insufficient to people one of its towns.‡

* Dr. Clarke's Trav. part 2. p. 338. Dr. Clarke landed at Lanerca on the 7th June, Trav. part 2. p. 312. By an error, I suppose, of the press, it is said that he left Cyprus on the 16th May, p. 356. But from his meteorological table it appears, that he departed from Cyprus on the 16th or 17th of June, after spending only nine days in the survey of the island. In that short space of time, however, an active traveller might become tolerably acquainted with the exterior appearance of the inhabitants.

† Dr. Clarke's Trav. part 2. p. 315.

‡ Ibid. p. 341.

This is somewhat astonishing, that so much beauty should exist amidst such an accumulation of physical and moral misery, under a climate so insalubrious, and a government so tyrannical. If the remarks of this celebrated traveller be accurate, the singular beauty of the Cypriots must proceed from some cause not easily to be accounted for by any known rules of physiology.

From the comparison of southern and northern beauty, M. de Reisbeck proceeds to an estimate of the relative proportion of strength among the inhabitants of the colder and the warmer regions of Europe. "It is well known," says he, "that no German will attempt to vie with the inhabitants of the southern countries in point of beauty; but, when you tell a German that the inhabitants of the south are stronger and more durably built than those of the north, they look upon this as a great paradox; and yet strength is the principal point of manly beauty. Have you ever seen a Sicilian wrestle with a Hanoverian or a Westphalian? I consider wrestling as the greatest proof of strength. I also believe, that you would not find, in all the north, a porter like the Genoese or Neapolitan carrier; that is, a man able to carry four hundred pounds weight for a considerable way; nor do I think, that, if both were put

into the same circumstances, as much could be done with German troops as with Spanish. We are not now to consider, that, in the present day, the latter are so much excelled in discipline; for, in the time of Charles V. they were both alike. But the German troops in Spain and Italy, served only once; and few of the armies, which the Emperors carried into Italy with them, ever came home. On the contrary, the Spaniards, under Charles V. fought many battles with great reputation on the Rhine, as well as in Holland,* the climate of which is so different from their own: they shewed more valour, and bore greater fatigues, than the natives themselves, who must have been subdued had it not been that they were assisted by external circumstances, and that the Prince of Orange's spirit did more than all the Minheers put together."

"The national pride of the Germans has led them to give themselves a pre-eminence over the southern nations, which history, nature, and appearances, equally give the lie to.† They imagine that understanding, cou-

* Reisbeck has, in this place, made a mistake. The wars which the Spaniards carried on in Holland, were in the reigns of Philip II. Philip III. and Philip IV.

† I have given these extracts in the words of the translation, the style of which the reader will perceive to be intolerably low and vulgar. It appears that the translator has adhered too closely to the German, and thereby expressed the sense in very bad English.

rage, activity, strength, and liberty, are the natural appendages of their thick and foggy air; and that the south is the natural habitation of stupidity, indolence, cowardice, and tyranny. On the contrary, consider what is deposed by history, appearances, and nature. History teaches us that light is come into the world from the south; appearances teach us that the Spaniards and Italians are much more frugal in eating and drinking, and, probably too, in the enjoyments of love, than the Germans, amongst whom we include the Danes, the Swedes, the Russians, and the Poles;* and nature teaches us, that bodily and mental beauty are commonly to be found where the great Creator of the bodies of men has appointed the finest forms, and the greatest strength.† Let us examine this position a little more fully: compare the understandings of men, as they are more and more removed from the happy air of Greece, Asia Minor, and Italy, till you come to the North Pole, and you will find, that nature does not suffer the inhabitants of the coast of Barbary, the Arabs, the people of the coast of Guinea, and the

* Reisbeck here makes a singular classification. Scandinavia, comprising Sweden and Norway, as well as Denmark, was considered by the ancients as a part of Germany; but Russia was never included in that designation.

† This observation will, in an aggregate or national point of view, be found just; but, it admits of numerous individual exceptions.

Abyssinians, to sink into the same degree of indolence and cowardice, as the Greenlanders, the Samoiedes, and the Laplanders.* What astonishing proofs do the negroes give us of bodily strength, and courage, and cool intrepidity, a sure sign that the warm and genial air of the south, raises human nature, and that the bitter and cold blasts of the north, depress it."

"But," continues M. Reisbeck, "perhaps you will tell me, that at present, the inhabitants of the north, excel those of the south. I allow it; but it proves nothing more than that religion, manners, and government, have more influence over men than climate. But these very manners, customs, and arts of government, which, in the present century, give the north such an advantage over the south, came originally from the south. What are our republics more than copies of the Greek and Roman? Crippled as our legislation is, in comparison of those of Carthage, Egypt, Rome; and Athens, it is only what we have been able to gather out of the ruins of those states. Have the Prussian tactics any thing better in them than the Macedonian phalanx.† Can any one be surprised that the people who

* The Laplanders, although they have an aversion to war, are in some respects active, bold, and enterprising.

† Reisbeck here advances a position that might be easily refuted.

dwelt near the Elbe and the Weser, should have overcome Varus, when we see that the North Americans, by nature the most cowardly, and at the breaking out of the war, the most undisciplined people upon earth,* are able by the advantages of their woods, rivers, and pools, and the extent of their uncultivated country, to oppose all the force that Great Britain can bring against them? And yet the climate of North America is not so adverse to the English, as that of the north of Germany was to the Romans; nor was Germany at that time near so well cultivated as North America now is. Let a man conceive Varus's army on the river St. Lawrence, Lake Superior, the Lake of the Illinois, and the upper regions of the Mississippi, and still he will have no true idea of their situation in Germany. They were far from possessing the facilities of providing for the exigences of war, which they would have had in North America. Germany was, at that time, an uninterrupted wood: its rivers were not confined within a standing bed but in several places, formed immense morasses, too many and too visible marks of which still remain."

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* Reisbeck here speaks in a hyperbolical stile: many nations, even all those of Asia and Africa, knew much less of discipline than the North Americans.

“The inhabitants of Germany, who afterwards subdued the south, were no doubt indebted for this advantage, to the wars which the Romans had before waged against them, just as the Turks and North Americans have become good soldiers by their wars with the Russians and English.* What think you, if any person had told the Scipios, that the conquerors of Rome should come out of the Hercynian forests: would they have attributed any thing to the climate? No, they would have answered, that the manners, constitution, and armies of Rome must first be changed, and that was the case.”

“It is a striking instance of the bodily weakness of the northern nations, that they always become enervated as soon as they have been sometime in the south, which they never could cope with long; whereas, no history informs us of the climate of the north ever having been fatal to the strength and activity of the Romans. How did Cæsar’s troops hold out in Gaul, Britain, and Holland? How did the Romans behave under the emperors on the Rhine and the Danube, and in the neighbourhood of the Elbe and the Weser? You tell us, it is the climate which prevents the northern

* This is a just and useful observation, worthy the attention of statesmen.

people from being hardy in the south. But, were the Romans effeminate when their forefathers eat oatmeal pap? Were the Spartans or the Macedonians effeminate? The generality of the Spaniards and Italians of this age, are by no means a weak people. It is not, therefore, the climate alone that makes the difference: it is rather the weak and nervous system of the northern nations that renders them unable to bear the contrast of the hot days and cold nights, which braces up the strong built natives; nor can they support the change made in their way of life. The great bodies of the Dutch, Danes, and Poles, are mere lumps of flesh and bones, the former of which is disgustingly flabby. On the other hand, the Italians, as well as the Spaniards, are more sinewy and more muscular, which is the true character of bodily strength. Nor are the minds of the northern nations less weak than their bodies.”*

Although climate may have a direct influence on the human species, sufficiently perceptible, when not counteracted by that of other causes, it appears that its principal force is rather of an indirect nature, as acting on the productions of the earth, and facilitating or rendering more difficult, the means of subsistence.

* Reisbeck's Trav. vol. 3. let. 59. p. 126, &c.

tence. Mr. Orme says, "The texture of the human frame in India seems to bear proportion with the rigidity of the northern monsoon, as that does with the distance from Tartary; but as in the southern monsoon, heats are felt at the very foot of mount Caucasus, as intense as in any part of India, very few of the inhabitants of Hindostan are endowed with the nervous strength, or athletic size, of the most robust nations of Europe. Southward of Lahore, we see through India a race of men whose make, physionomy, and defect of muscular strength, convey ideas of effeminacy which surprises, when pursued through such numbers of the species, and when compared with the form of the European, who is making the observation.

"The muscular strength of the Indian is still less than might be expected from the appearance of the texture of his frame. Two English lawyers have performed in one day, the work of thirty-two Indians: allowances being made for the difference of dexterity, and the advantage of European instruments, the disparity is still very great, and would have been more so, had the Indian been obliged to work with the instrument of the European, as he could scarcely have been able to wield it. As much as the labourer in Hindostan is deficient in the capacity of exerting a great deal of strength at

an onset, so is he endowed with a suppleness throughout his whole frame, which enables him to work long in his own degree of labour; and which renders those contortions and postures, that would cramp the inhabitants of northern regions, no constraint to him. There are not more extraordinary tumblers in the world. Their messengers will go fifty miles a day, for twenty or thirty days without intermission. Their infantry march faster, and with less weariness, than Europeans, but could not march at all, if they were to carry the same baggage and accoutrements. Exceptions to this general defect of nervous strength, are found among the inhabitants of the mountains, which run in ranges of various directions throughout the continent of Hindostan. In these, even under the tropic, Europeans have met with a savage, whose bow they could scarcely draw to the head of a formidable arrow, tinged with the blood of tigers, whose skins he offers to sale." After exhibiting this picture of the weakness and effeminacy of the people of India, Mr. Orme proceeds to trace these defects to what may be denominated the indirect influence of the climate. "It is certain," says he, "that there is no climate in which we may not find the same effects produced on the human species, as in climates entirely different in situation, and in every

other circumstance. The Sybarites, whose territory was not more than a day's journey from the country of the Horatii, the Cincinnati, and the Scipios, were more effeminate than the subjects of Sardanapulus; and there are Sybarites, at this day, in the country of Vercingetorix. The Britons, although they possess at this day, all the courage of their painted ancestors, who beat the greatest general in the world out of their country, are doubtless incapable of bearing, like them, the fatigue and hardships of a campaign. But it would be in contradiction to all our feelings, not to allow, that it is much more difficult to bring the human race to particular habits in some countries than in others. To make a Sybarite of an inhabitant of the 50th degree of latitude, infinite inventions must have been carried to the greatest perfection. Apartments must be closed and warmed, so as to render the alterations of seasons little sensible to him: he must be carried in vehicles, contrived to be as warm as the room which he leaves, and almost as easy as the chair in which he slumbers; his food must be every thing that is not simple."

"To produce the same effects in such a country as Hindostan," continues Mr. Orme, "nothing is necessary but to give the man his chilly food. The effect of the sun, on the perspiration of the human body, together with

the softness of the air, renders this secretion in India more powerful than the effect of labour in other countries. The awkward constraint arising from rest in northern climates is the call of nature, to throw off something noxious to the habit, or to quicken the circulation into warmth. Sensible of neither of these impulses, and satisfied with the present sense of ease, the inhabitant of Hindostan has no conception of any thing salutary in the use of exercise, and receiving no agreeable sensation from it, considers it in those not obliged to it by necessity, as ridiculous." To these observations he adds others, respecting the facilities of procuring food, from the abundance of spontaneous productions, the easy culture of rice, which is sown immediately before the periodical rains, by which the labour of watering is greatly diminished, the ready means of constructing houses, with a trifling labour, the little necessity of fuel and clothing, and the few wants of a people abstemious in diet, and whose constant beverage is water, all inebriating liquors being prohibited by the Hindoo religion.

"The bamboo," says Mr. Orme, "which grows every where, requires only one stroke of the hatchet to split it from one end to the other, and to divide it into laths of all lengths and of the smallest size; while entire, it

strong enough to serve as the support of such houses as the climate demands; for in the greater part of Hindostan, the bare earth affords a repose without danger of diseases in so temperate a climate. The palm and cocoanut trees give their large fanlike leaves, which naturally separate into long divisions, with which a mat may be made in a few minutes. A number of these mats laid over the scaffolding, erected with no other materials than the bamboo and packthread, compose in a day, a house, in which the Indian may live for six months, in those parts of Hindostan which are not subject to much rain. If a better house is required, walls of mud are carried up to the height of six or seven feet, and rendered, in a few days, extremely hard by the intense heat of the sun: these are covered with thatch, made of rushes or the stems of rice; and many persons of good casts, and far from being distressed in their fortunes, even Bramins, are satisfied with such a habitation. There are bricks, and very good ones in India; but a brick house is a certain mark that the inhabitant is either extravagant or rich.*

It is easy to conceive, that a people, whose habits of life are so simple, and whose wants are so few, living in a country where the cli-

* Orme's Dissert. on the effeminacy of the inhabitants of Hindostan.

mate and the soil concur in producing abundant supplies, should have far less need of labour, than nations situated in colder and less fertile regions. But this consideration will not account for the phenomena of character, which are found amongst the nations of the torrid zone. Of all the inhabitants of the tropical countries, the natives of Hindostan, and the Aborigines of the West India islands, are those alone whose characters display any remarkable degree of pusillanimity. The Birmans, are bold, active, and robust. Their shipwrights are described as athletic men, "Possessing in an eminent degree, that vigour which distinguishes Europeans, and gives them pre-eminence over the enervated nations of the east; nor do I imagine," says Major Symes, "that the inhabitants of any country are capable of greater bodily exertions than the Birmans."* They are also extremely addicted to poetry and music: they have epic as well as religious poems of great celebrity, and are fond of reciting in heroic verse, the exploits of their kings and generals.† The character of the Birmans is in almost every respect the reverse of that of the people of Bengal; and yet they live under the same degrees of latitude, and nothing but a range of mountains separates the

* Major Syme's Embassy to Ava, v. 2. p. 134.

† Syme's Embassy to Ava, v. 2. p. 330—399.

two countries. Both in the climate and soil, and in the spontaneous abundance of nature, the Birman empire greatly resembles Hindostan; and no physical cause whatever can be assigned for the contrast of character exhibited by the two nations.* The Malays, who may also be considered as neighbours to the Hindoos, inhabit countries equally fertile, and in a more southerly situation, being in the middle of the torrid zone. These Malays, however, instead of resembling the Hindoos in that pusillanimity which the heat of the climate is supposed to inspire, are the boldest and fiercest of the human race. They are the pirates of the Indian seas: one of their barks with twenty-five or thirty men has been known to board European ships of thirty or forty guns, to take possession of them, and murder with their poignards the greatest part of the crew. The Malay history is full of such enterprises which mark the desperate resolution of these barbarians. Their ferocious character is so well known to the European companies who have settlements in the East Indies, that they have universally agreed in prohibiting the captains of such of their ships as may touch at any of the Malay islands, from taking on board any

* In order to investigate this phenomenon in national character, it will be necessary to revert to the subject in treating of the effects of moral causes.

seaman of that nation, except in cases of the greatest necessity, and enjoining them not to exceed two or three on any account.

If climate possessed, either directly or indirectly, all the influence and power ascribed to it by Orme, Thunberg, and many other travellers, physiologists, and historians, no such difference could exist among nations inhabiting countries so similar in climate, soil, and productions, as that which is found between the ferocious Malay, and the peaceable passive Hindoo, whose characters are as diametrically opposite as if one lived under the equator and the other under the pole. If these examples were not sufficient, we need only cast a glance on the inhabitants of Madagascar and on the various nations and tribes of central Africa, where we find in the regions of the torrid zone, the Gallas, the Giagas, the Ansians, and other numerous hordes equally fierce, robust, and rapacious, not to mention the more civilized Abyssinians, whose appearance and character exhibit no marks either of bodily weakness or mental pusillanimity.

Turning our eyes from the old to the new world, we find, notwithstanding Dr. Robertson's hypothesis, that the boldest and fiercest of its original inhabitants resided within the limits of the torrid zone. The Spaniards and Portuguese in their first attempts to conquer

and colonise South America, found all those vast regions, which extend from the Andes to the Atlantic, and from the tropic of Capricorn to the tenth degree of north latitude, inhabited by ferocious and warlike tribes. The civilized and peaceable Peruvians, in a climate less warm than any other within the torrid zone, were the people who shewed the least courage in defending their country. The Mexicans, living in a tropical region, were the most southerly, and by far the most warlike and powerful of the nations of North America. In making a circuit round the torrid zone, we find the prevailing character of most of its inhabitants, directly the reverse of that which has, by many writers, been supposed to result from the influence of its climate. The Hindoos appear to furnish the only exception worthy of notice; but it is evident that their distinguishing characteristics are not the effects of their climate. Their Mahomedan conquerors and rulers, residing among them, breathing the same air, and exposed to the same atmospheric influence, remain very different, both in exterior appearance and character. This difference, therefore, must originate from moral rather than physical causes.*

The nature of the air which we breathe, has undoubtedly a very considerable influence

These will be investigated in the chapters which refer to moral causes.

on the animal spirits, and with these the operations of the mind have a close connexion. The Abbate Spalanzani, relating his observations on the top of Mount Etna, says, "The refined air which I breathed, as if it had been entirely vital, communicated a vigour and agility to my limbs, and an activity and life to my ideas, which appeared to be of a celestial nature."* In describing the Lipari or Æolian isles, after mentioning the poverty and hard living of the inhabitants, he remarks their attachment to their rugged and volcanic country, and attributes it in a great measure to the influence of the climate. "As to the contentment and tranquillity of these islanders, and the affection which they bear to their native country, I do not think I should greatly err, were I to ascribe it to the happy temperature of the climate, and the quality of the air, which, when pure, so greatly contributes to maintain in us the proper harmony between the solids and the fluids, or the state of perfect health. A proof of this I experienced in myself. Notwithstanding the continual and great fatigues which I underwent in my excursions among those rocks, and, notwithstanding my advanced age, I felt in myself an energy and vigour of body, an agility and liveliness of mind, and a certain

* Spalanzani's Trav. in Sicily, chap. 8.

animation of my whole frame which I had experienced no where else, except on the summit of Mount Etna. In countries infested with impure air and thick vapours, I have never been able to apply myself to my favourite studies immediately after dinner; but under this sky, which is so rarely overclouded with vapours, I could write on the spot, at any time, a part of these observations which I am now about to present to the public. How immense the difference between this most pure and almost celestial air, and the fœtid and foggy atmosphere of some of the low plains of Lombardy, surrounded by stagnant and muddy waters, and unhealthful rice grounds, producing continual clouds and fogs in winter, and obstinate fevers in summer; where the spirits are depressed and rendered dull: and where, to complete the catalogue of ills and inconveniences, innumerable hosts of frogs in the warm season, both by night and by day, deafen the ear with their incessant croakings.’’*

With the greatest respect and deference for the talents and judgment of this scientific traveller, it may however be observed, that the plains of Lombardy, which Spalanzani describes as the region of impure air and muddy water, and the city of Venice enveloped in its

* Spalanzani's Trav. conclusion of chap. 24.

moist and foggy atmosphere, have produced many of those illustrious painters, poets, and literati, who have conferred so much glory on Italy. Amongst the celebrated painters, Correggio was born near Modena: Titian was a native of the province of Friuli, and resided the greatest part of his life at Venice: * Giorgione was a native and inhabitant of the same district: Tintoretto also was a native of Venice: Guido, Dominichino, and the three Carracci, all drew their first breath at Bologna: Parmeggiana and Lanfranco were natives and residents of Parma: Poesy is, not less than painting, indebted to Lombardy. Mantua, environed by marshes, produced the prince of the latin poets, Virgil, whose immortal works will be read as long as Rome shall exist, or her language and name be remembered. Vida, the first poet of the second Augustan age of Roman literature, was a native of Cremona; although Naples gave birth to Sannazarius, whose classical verse has eternized the ancient glory of the Queen of the Adriatic. † But a long list of names might be produced to

* The foggy atmosphere of the country near the Po and of Venice neither damped the genius of Titian nor shortened his life; he died at Venice, A. D. 1576, at the age of ninety-nine.

† “Una Italum regina, altæ pulcherrima Romæ Æmula, quæ terris qua dominaris aquis. Tu tibi vel reges cives facis: O decus! O lux Ausoniæ.” Sannazarius lib. 3. eleg. 1.—Sole Queen of the Italians, most beautiful rival of lofty Rome, thou who reignest over lands and seas, thou makest thy citizens kings: O glory! O Light of Italy!

prove the success of the Parmesans and the Modenese in every effort of genius and every literary pursuit. In regard to Modena, it suffices to mention the correct and indefatigable Muratori,* whose “*Annali d’ Italia*”—“*Ann. Medii Ævi*”—and “*Antiq. d’ Italia*,” are models of antiquarian and historical research, and the learned and elegant Tiraboschi, celebrated for his “*Italia Literaria, or History of Italian Literature*,” a work which confers honour on himself and his country. The immortal Livy was born and resided chiefly at Padua.†

All these examples of men who have distinguished themselves in poetry and painting, by the brilliancy of their imagination, as well as by the reach of their understanding, and the correctness of their judgment in the various pursuits of literature, in a country of which the atmosphere is considered by this philosophical traveller, as not the most favourable to the vivacity of the animal spirits and the activity of the mind, do not, however, amount to a proof that climate has no influence on the

* Muratori’s works are exceedingly valuable, and consist of near 50 vols. fol. Both he and Tiraboschi were Ex-Jesuits and librarians to the Duke of Modena.

† Livy, the Roman historian, was a native of Padua, and from his education and residence there, acquired some local peculiarities of language, which critics named *patavinitatem*. Quintil. lib. 1,

human species. They only tend to shew, that civil institutions and social circumstances are in most cases able to counteract and even to annihilate the effects of natural causes. The pure air on the summit of Etna could not have afforded to Spalanzani the same helps towards mental improvement, as he found in the university of Padua, nor to Muratori and Tiraboschi those which they met with in the library of the Duke of Modena; neither could the fine atmosphere of the Æolian isles have animated the genius of the above mentioned eminent painters, like the patronage which they received from the popes and the princes of Italy.

Bologna, situated near the foot of the Apennines, although enjoying an air somewhat more pure than the low parts of Lombardy, is far more remarkable for the fertility of its soil than for the purity of its atmosphere. That city, however, has produced a greater number of eminent painters and literati than any other in Italy, except Rome and Florence; while Naples, enjoying one of the finest climates in the world, has not been distinguished by any excellence in letters or arts. Bologna therefore, owes this pre-eminence solely to her institutions and her liberal patronage of merit. "The two grand features of the Bolognese character," says a judicious traveller, "are

formed by the two most honourable passions that can animate the human soul,—the love of knowledge and the love of liberty; passions which predominate through the whole series of their history, and are justly expressed on their standard. “*Libertas*” blazes in golden letters in the centre, while “*Bononia docet*” waves in embroidery down the borders.*

“In general,” says the Baron de Reisbék, “nature displays a far different vigour, a far more magnificent spirit of creation in the south, than she does in the northern provinces. What riches and variety and strength are seen in the vegetable kingdoms of the south! The shrub which furnishes the balsam of Mecca, and the plants from Ceylon and the Molucca islands, shame the sterility of the earth near the Poles; and the vigour of nature seems evidently to decrease in proportion as we recede from the equator. Our savoury fruits have all come to us from the south; and the better tasted and more spirited they are, the less able are they to bear a northern climate. The nobler fruits, just like the generous wines which gladden and make strong the heart of man, cannot take root in the north. In the same manner, in the mineral kingdom, nature shews herself more vigorous in the south than she does in the north. And in the animal

* Eustace's Classical Tour through Italy, vol. 1. p. 141.

world ! how very different are the beasts of the south from those of the north ! Why then should not nature, which weaves every thing else, more strongly in a warm climate, also weave man more strongly there ? It is indeed true, that understanding and morals are not the exclusive property of any strip of land. They depend on laws, customs, education, and government, which may, and often do render the artificial man superior to the natural one. But the natural understanding awakes sooner from its sleep in a warm country, than it does in a cold one. Under a warm sun, abstract ideas are more quickly formed. The senses are much clearer, and the understanding depends on the quickness of the senses. Imagination, which is so connected with all the operations of the sun, has more force in Sicily than in Iceland. The first force of impressions made by the senses, gives the powers of the mind an alacrity in the southern countries, which is the true character of genius, and which the inhabitants of the north cannot reach by any cold abstractions which they may arrive at from their manners, customs, and government. Nor are the fine moral feelings so independent of the fine sensual ones, as some philosophers who know little of human nature, are willing to imagine.*”

* Reisbeck's Trav. vol. 3, lett. 59, p. 128. &c

In perusing these extracts, the reader will perceive, that Reisbeck's expressions are often confused and ill chosen ; and that his language, in the English translation, is very inelegant ; but his observations in general are just, and his theory will bear the test of examination. It is certain that all vegetable and animal life appears far more vigorous in the tropical than in the polar regions. Heat is the principle of all animation. The fierceness of the lion and the strength of the elephant, are found in the highest perfection under the burning climates of Africa and southern Asia ; while the arctic regions, with the single exception of the bear, produce only animals of a timid disposition or diminutive size. It is, therefore, analogous to the whole system of animated nature, that the human species should display a greater degree of perfection in a warm, than in an intensely cold climate : and this theory is confirmed by the evidence of fact. Sir George Staunton observes, that the human frame is better suited to the hottest than the coldest climate.* And if we compare the fierce Malay, the acute and vigorous Birman, the well sized and athletic Abyssinian, the robust negro, and the ferocious tribes of central Africa, with the timid, unwarlike, and diminutive Laplander,

* Sir G. Staunton's Embassy to China, v. 3. ch. 2. p. 158.

Samoiede, and Greenlander, we shall find, that within the arctic circle, the human species degenerates, both the body and the mind being stunted in their growth by the excessive cold of the climate, and the consequent sterility of those dreary regions.

Although historians often speak of the hardy and warlike nations of the north, it ought to be remembered, that the Goths were a horde which emigrated from the northern and eastern shores of the Caspian sea. But a colony of them took possession of Scandinavia, where their descendants being joined by the Saxons and other German tribes, desolated the coasts of Europe by their piratical expeditions. Not only the Goths, but the Vandals, the Huns, the Siempi, and all the other martial barbarians who subverted the Roman empire and over-ran Europe, issued from the central regions of Asia, situated between the 40th and 50th degrees of latitude. Within the same limits, were also comprised the original seats of the Turks, the Mongols, the Manshurs, and all those warlike nations who conquered, in later times, so many of the southern countries of Asia. The Russian empire, at the present day, comprises a great part of the north of Europe and all the northern regions of Asia; but its armies are almost entirely drawn from the southern provinces. Few warriors or mea

of genius have been produced in any country beyond the 60th degree of latitude. After that line is passed, courage and genius begin to lose their energy, and at the polar circle they appear to be almost extinguished. Mr. Gibbon observes, "that in the northern parts of Siberia, the conquerors of the earth, insensibly degenerate into a race of deformed and diminutive savages, who tremble at the sound of arms."* From all these considerations, it will therefore appear, that heat of climate, without other causes, does not depress courage and genius, and that cold only produces these baleful effects where its rigour is extreme.

* Gibbon's *Dec. Rom. Emp.* vol. 4. ch. 26. p. 359. By "Conquerors of the earth," Mr. Gibbon must mean the descendants of the Goths, Huns, Mongols, Tartars, &c. colonies of whom appear to have straggled into those high northern latitudes.

CHAP. III.

FOOD.

AMONG the physical causes which must be considered as producing perceptible effects on the bodily and mental powers and faculties of the human species, and consequently on the character of nations, the nature of the food on which they chiefly subsist, will hold a distinguished place. There is no doubt, says an eminent physician, that the whole constitution of body may be changed by diet alone. The fluids may be thereby attenuated or condensed, rendered mild or acrimonious, coagulated or diluted, to almost any degree. Nor are its effects upon the solids less considerable. They may be braced or relaxed, have the sensibility, motions, &c. greatly increased or diminished by different kinds of aliment.*

* Buchan's Domestic Medicine, chap. 3.

But notwithstanding the perfection to which natural philosophy and medical science have attained, it is not easy to determine either from theory or facts, what kind of food may be the most suitable to the human constitution, in different situations, employments, and climates. Temperance, however, is universally allowed to be the most conducive to health and vigour of body and mind. The brook fed blood of the hermit is richer in its qualities and contributes more effectually to the continuance of life and energy, than that of the epicurean, whose circulation is daily excited and forcibly propelled by the most poignant sauces and wines of the highest flavour. Factitious means of exciting the animal spirits impart a momentary feeling and appearance of vigour ; but at the same time they destroy its substance and reality. The diet of the Russian populace is extremely coarse and simple, and appears to be calculated for promoting longevity ; but their love of strong liquors, when they are able to procure them, often counteracts the effects of their abstemiousness in food. In all the lower classes, the soldiery excepted, a healthy old age is very common. " Lively old men of a hundred years," says Mr. Tooke, " are, in all parts of Russia, no unusual appearance ; but probably the number of them would be far greater if the propensity to dram drinking

were not the occasion of so great a mortality in the middle period of life.*

It has been doubted by some, whether animal food be necessary to maintain the human body in the full perfection of vigour. Dr. Adam Smith says, "That grain and other vegetables with the help of milk, cheese, and butter, or oil where butter is not to be had, it is well known from experience, can, without any butcher's meat, afford the most plentiful, the most wholesome, the most nourishing, and the most invigorating diet."† It has even been asserted that the nations which subsist on vegetable diet, are of all men, the handsomest and the most robust, the least exposed to diseases and violent passions, and they also are those who attain to the greatest longevity.‡ Some kinds of vegetable diet, however, are far more salubrious and more invigorating than others. The author of the *Wealth of Nations* says, "In some parts of Lancashire, it is pretended, that bread made of oatmeal, is a heartier food for labouring people than wheaten bread; and I have frequently heard the same doctrine maintained in Scotland. I am, however, somewhat doubtful of the truth of it. The common

* Tooke's *View of Russ. Emp.* v. 2. p. 4. &c.

† *Wealth of Nations*, v. 3. p. 355.

‡ Bernardin de St. Pierre, *Stud. Nat.* p. 359.

people in Scotland, who are fed with oatmeal, are in general neither so strong nor so handsome as the same class of people in England, who are fed with wheaten bread. They neither work so well nor look so well; and as there is not the same difference between the people of fashion in the two countries, experience would seem to shew, that the food of the common people in Scotland is not so suitable to the human constitution as that of their neighbours of the same rank in England." But he observes, that it seems to be otherwise with potatoes, and says that the strongest men and the handsomest women in the British dominions, are found amongst the lower orders of the Irish, who subsist chiefly on that root, and use very little of either butcher's meat or bread. He adds, that "No food can afford a more decisive proof of its nourishing quality, or of its being peculiarly suitable to the health of the human constitution.*"

In examining Dr. Smith's eulogium of the potatoe, it is proper to observe, that in general, the poorest of the Irish peasantry rent a small piece of ground and keep a cow. By this means they are furnished with milk; and if they be obliged to sell all their butter, which is very often the case, they have butter milk in

* Smith's Wealth of Nations, v. 1, p. 258—259.

great plenty ; and it can scarcely be doubted that these products of the dairy, together with potatoes, form a more salubrious nutriment to children and young persons than the more stimulating diet used in England and several other countries. The soundness and strength of the human constitution depends, in a great measure, on the simplicity of the diet in an early period of life ; for whatever a more advanced age may admit or require, youth has certainly no need of any stimulus. It is through this cause that the most robust men are generally met with amongst those who have, during the period of youth, been accustomed to live on the coarsest fare, and to take much bodily exercise.*

In regard to his observations on oatmeal bread, Dr. Smith appears either to have been misinformed respecting facts, or mistaken in calculating causes and consequences. His comparison of the lower class of people in Scotland with those of England, seems to be just ; but if the former be somewhat inferior to the latter in robust appearance and capability of labour, they are able to endure far greater hardships and privations ; and if they possess a less degree of bodily strength than their

* If labour be excessive, it soon wears out the human machine ; but as this can never be a national case, it does not come within the limits of any inquiry relative to national character.

southern neighbours, that circumstance must be ascribed to the general poverty and parsimony of their food, rather than to the particular article of oatmeal. In Lancashire, and the western parts of Yorkshire, Dr. Smith's observation is far from being verified. The lower class of people in these districts, use scarcely any other bread but that which is made of oatmeal; and they are as robust and athletic, and as capable of great exertions of strength, as the inhabitants of any other part of Great Britain. But it must be observed, that in the districts just mentioned, they use a sufficient quantity of animal food as well as of wholesome beer. Oatmeal, therefore, constitutes only a moderate proportion of their food. But Dr. Smith seems to have drawn his theory from those poor parts of Scotland where it may be considered as almost the whole nouriture of the inhabitants. His comparison of the superior classes in England and Scotland is also inconclusive. Amidst the profusion of different aliments used by people of that description, bread is so far from being a principal article of food, that whether it be made of oatmeal or wheaten flour is a matter of little importance in regard to their health, their beauty, or their strength.

The human constitution, as well as the taste, may be formed to various kinds of food. Many

savage tribes on the sea coasts and in islandss subsist almost wholly on fish, and yet appear as strong and as active as those who who live by hunting and eat the flesh of various land animals. In many civilized countries, the lower classes subsist on diet that to an Englishman would appear ill calculated for the support of health and strength. The Norwegians frequently grind the bark of trees to mix with their oatmeal or barley bread; and yet are scarcely surpassed in health, strength, or longevity, by any people in Europe. The coolies or porters of Tunis, in Africa, who seldom eat any thing but bread and oil of olives, may fairly be ranked amongst the strongest men in the world. "The strength and agility of these coolies," says a late traveller, "are almost incredible: having a great many ships to load, we employed several of these people, and have frequently seen one of them carry a load which weighed half a ton English weight, a distance of thirty or forty yards.*" This is certainly an exertion of strength which few men in Great Britain are able to make. The same writer in describing the manners and depicting the character of the Arabs of Bussora and its vicinity says, "That their diet consists chiefly of bread, water, and

* Jackson's Journey from India, p. 65.

dates, and that, although their food is so simple, they have, generally speaking, twice the strength of Europeans.''* In this part of Mr. Jackson's narrative, we cannot avoid suspecting some mistake or exaggeration, unless we suppose him to mean, that the Arabs, when compared with the Europeans, possess in a two-fold degree, the faculty of endurance under long continued fatigue; as it can scarcely be supposed, that they should be able to exert in a single onset, double the strength of an Englishman, Spaniard, or Italian. If, however, what he says of the coolies or porters of Tunis be correct, his assertion relative to the Arabs of Bussora, cannot be regarded as absolutely incredible.

Whatever degree of credit may be attached to these facts, which Mr. Jackson relates as an ocular observer, we have the authority of several other travellers to shew, that the Arabs of Syria, Egypt, &c. although they are extremely abstemious, subsisting on the most simple food, and using no other beverage than water, milk, coffee, or sherbert, are not deficient either in stature, strength, or activity. Hasselquist observes, that the Arabs of Egypt are of a middle stature, full of flesh, but not fat, with strong muscles, and a rough skin.†

* Jackson's Journey from India, p. 36.

† Hasselquist's Trav. p. 73.

And a celebrated French traveller says, that wherever he has seen the Arabs in Judea, in Egypt, and in Barbary, they appeared to be rather tall than short, well made, and active, with a haughty demeanour.*

But after all that can be said concerning the beauty, the strength, and longevity of certain nations and tribes, who appear to be extremely abstemious, it is consistent with reason, and for the most part with observation and experience, that a moderately plentiful diet, without excess, is the most congenial to the human frame. A child that is pinched with hunger, says an eminent physician, will never become a strong or healthy man.† The nature of the body requires a certain portion of aliment for its support, and where that is deficient, health and vigour must decline. This, it seems, was the opinion of the early Greeks, or at least that of Homer, who describes their manners. "Command the Argives," said the prudent Ulysses, "to take the repast: let them take food and wine, for these are strength and valour in war. He that is filled with wine, whose sinews are strengthened with food, will unceasing through the day urge the fight. Undaunted is his soul in his breast,

* Chateaubriant's Trav. v. 1. p. 413.

† Buchan's Domest. Med. chap. 1. p. 11.

unfatigued remain his stout limbs.”* Excess of eating and drinking, is in the highest degree injurious to health and strength; but a competent portion of nourishment is favourable both to bodily and mental exertion.† From the scantiness of their food, it proceeds that savages are, for the most part, inferior in strength to civilized men; and the weakness and pusillanimity of the Hindoos seem to be chiefly owing to the abstemious mode of living prescribed by their religion. Almost all their different casts entirely abstain from animal food; and rice is nearly the whole of their nourishment. Those of the Rajah or warrior cast, are allowed to eat animal food; and they greatly surpass the other Hindoos in strength as well as in courage. But the different effects of a plentiful and scanty diet, the former united with activity, the latter with indolence,

* Homer's Iliad, lib. 19. Whatever the Greeks might be in the days of Homer, they were certainly free livers and even great drinkers at the time of Alexander. Vide Quint. Curt. lib. 5. Plutarch Vita Alexandri. And M. de Guy describes them as such in the present age. Sentimental Journey, v. 1. p. 143.

† The English reader will scarcely agree in opinion with Rousseau, who says, “Il est certain que les grands mangeurs de viande sont en general cruel set feroces, plusque les autres hommes. Cette observation est de tons les lieux et de tons les tems.” Emile, tom. 1. p. 224. “It is certain, that those who eat a great deal of animal food, are more cruel and ferocious than other men. This observation holds good in all places and in all times.” Rousseau's assertion, however, is contradicted by well known facts. Few people eat more animal food than the English; but few are less cruel and ferocious.

were never more conspicuous than in the contrast between the Europeans and the aborigines of America. From the uncivilized state of the natives of the new world, their ignorance of agriculture and their want of the most useful domestic animals, they were able to procure only a very small quantity of food. The heat of the torrid zone, naturally invited them to indolence, while no great social or moral objects presented itself to excite them to exertion, and from this concurrence of circumstances they acquired the habit of subsisting on a third part of the food required by the Spaniards, who are the most abstemious people in Europe, and they were proportionably deficient in strength.

CHAP. IV.

RACE.

THE greatest part of the writers who have made the history of man the subject of their inquiries, have overlooked or paid too little attention to a circumstance which, if thoroughly investigated and fully understood, might contribute to account for various phenomena in his physical and moral existence, that seem to be covered with a veil of impenetrable obscurity. When we contemplate the various characters and dispositions not of individuals only, but also of numerous collections of men, living under the same climate, and nourished by the same kind of food, we are sometimes unable to discover any such difference in their government, laws or religion, or other moral circum-

stances, as can account in a satisfactory manner for so marked a distinction. In such cases are we not tempted to believe, that something more than is generally supposed, may be attributed to race? Reason and revelation concur in representing the whole human species as issuing from the same stock; but experience shews, that families are often distinguished not only by certain peculiarities of external organization, but also by particular dispositions of mind, which prevail through all or the greater part of their branches. On the contrary it sometimes happens, that one or two individuals belonging to a family, differ greatly from the rest of its members in exterior appearance as well as in disposition and intellect. While, therefore, the human species was composed of only a few families, some of the individuals might be very different from the others, both in their bodily and mental faculties. It is neither impossible, nor extremely improbable, that the three sons of Noah might greatly differ in strength, courage, genius, and the other gifts of nature; or such a difference might take place amongst the children of these patriarchs, or other parents and founders of tribes or colonies, and be perpetuated in numberless directions and ramifications.

This view of the varieties of race among the human species, is analogous to what is dis-

coverable throughout the whole system of animated nature. A late writer ascribes the distinctive properties and perfection of animals solely to the breed, independent of climate and all other extraneous circumstances, and adduces in proof of his hypothesis the successful practice of jockeys and sportsmen. "The consequence," says he, "of this kind of attention to breed, continued for ages is, that although the climate of Great Britain has never been deemed peculiarly favourable to the horse species, yet it is admitted, that in no part of Europe are horses bred that can equal those of this country, either in swiftness of foot or in strength and perseverance of course. In Arabia, indeed, where this animal may be esteemed the chief support of the family, and where the very existence of the owner depends, on many occasions, on the powers of his horse, this circumstance has obtained a still greater degree of attention than in Britain. The pedigree of a horse is there preserved with as great care as the genealogy of a royal family in Europe, and the interposition of the magistrate is called in upon every occasion of this sort to prevent frauds, and to authenticate the deed. In that country, it is not so much swiftness of foot that they regard, as the faculty of bearing fatigue and abstinence without being exhausted; and this quality, they find runs in the blood, being

transmissible to the descendants of a race, which is known to possess it in an eminent degree with as much certainty as any known quality whatever. And so successful have they been in augmenting it by their uninterrupted care for an undiscernible* length of time, always to select the most eminent of this kind to breed from, that they have obtained a race which possesses this quality to a degree that could never have been deemed possible by other nations, had not the evidence of the fact been altogether undeniable.”†

From the horse, Dr. Anderson transfers his observations to the dog. “How long it is since the Spanish pointer was introduced into this island I am unable to say; but we all know that this breed of pointers is reared every day; and there is reason to believe that some of them are to be found in this country, at the present hour, which possess the distinctive qualities of that kind of dog, in perhaps as great perfection as ever they were known to do at any period of time. The same may be said of the beagle, the hound, the terrier, the spaniel, the bull-dog, pug-dog, and every other variety.”‡

* Dr. Anderson here uses an expression not very common: he evidently means from time immemorial.

† Dr. Anderson's *Recreations*, v. 1. p. 72—73.

‡ Dr. Ander. *Recreat.* v. 1. p. 56.

The same philosophical observer of animated nature, supposes that the varieties amongst animals are distinctions which man may change at his pleasure, by mixing the breed, and preserve as long as he pleases, by keeping them unmixed: and that whenever a change in this respect takes place, it is solely by mixture of blood, and happens alike under every climate. "There is, however," says he, "a still less variation that is observed to take place among animals, and which might be ranked by naturalists as a subdivision of varieties; because it never tends to blend one variety with another, but merely to divide it into lesser groups, which might be called families or breeds, each of these possessing certain discriminative peculiarities, which, though not absolutely permanent, are yet so durable as to be sufficient for the most part, clearly to distinguish these breeds from others."* The origin of this variety," continues Dr. Anderson, "is purely accidental, *i. e.* our knowledge of the nature of animal life is not sufficiently perfect to enable us to trace any circumstance that should give rise to such variations."† But experience sufficiently shews, that the different breeds of animals possess characteris-

* Dr. Anderson's Recreations, v. 1. p. 62.

† Ibid.

tic distinctions, which cannot be changed or obliterated by the influence of climate or any other extraneous circumstance. It is well known that the Merino sheep do not degenerate in England; and we are assured, on unquestionable authority, that they do not degenerate in France.* The most eminent breeders of cattle agree, that attention to race is the only effectual means that can be used for the improvement of stock, and the success of their practice proves the truth of their theory.

No one will attempt to deny that there exists an unquestionable analogy between the human frame and other animal bodies; and it is also observable, that the same individual and family differences are seen among men as among brutes. Dr. Anderson pursues this analogy, and after remarking that the diversities among animals are infinitely numerous and relate to the internal qualities, as well as to the form of the body and external appearance, transfers his observations and theories to the human species. "To this origin," says he, "we must trace the well known phenomenon of family likeness, and although this in the human species is wonderfully weakened

* Bourgoanne's Trav. in Spain, chap. 3.

† Witness the improvements made in the breeds, not only of horses but also of horned cattle, sheep, &c.

among European nations by the law of consanguinity preventing marriages between persons who are near a kin, yet in spite of this, a family likeness and a family cast of character have been often known to prevail for several successive centuries. Its influence is still more observable in regard to national appearance and character; but no where is that so distinctly perceptible as among the clans in the Highlands of Scotland, which having each originally sprung from one family that separated itself from all others, like the varieties of other creatures in a wild state, and preserved themselves distinct from the neighbouring clans till of late years, by those never ending feuds and acts of hostility in which they were incessantly engaged, each of them were thus induced always to intermarry among their own clans, so that it sometimes happens that a race of people will be found there, inhabiting one valley, whose features, complexion, stature, and general appearance, are extremely different from the inhabitants of another valley, separated from the first only by a ridge of mountains that are easily accessible, insomuch that a person, who is acquainted with this peculiarity, will know by the appearance of the first person he meets what clan he belongs to.”*

* Dr. Anderson's Recreations, v. I. p. 70—71. The reader, although he cannot approve of Dr. Anderson's embarrassed style, and the length

The authority of Dr. Anderson, who was a native of Scotland, and well acquainted with the Highlanders, may be considered as unquestionable in regard to the clans. And he adduces the case of the gipsies and the jews as an additional proof of the influence of race on the exterior appearance of the human species. But the gipsies can scarcely be considered at this day as a distinct race; for although on their first appearance in Europe, they seemed to be a particular colony or tribe wholly different from any that inhabited this quarter of the globe, yet it is certain, that in process of time they have been joined by numbers of vagabonds in all the countries in which they have been permitted to reside;* and their singular manner of living, may have greatly contributed to give them that peculiar cast of countenance by which they may in general be recognized.

But the jews furnish the most striking instance of a marked distinction of race that is to be met with in the whole range of physical

of his involved sentences, will acknowledge the accuracy of his observations and the soundness of his arguments.

* Concerning the origin of the gipsies, various opinions have been entertained, and much has been written on the subject; but the most probable account is, that they were Egyptian fugitives who abandoned their country when it was conquered by the Turkish Emperor Selim, as they are said to have made their first appearance in Europe soon after that event.

logical observation, so far as it relates to the human species. The perpetuated effect of this distinction, seems to overpower the influence of all other physical, and indeed, of most moral causes. The jews are a numerous people, and extensively diffused over most of the countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa. They subsist, generally speaking, on the same kind of food as the other inhabitants of those countries; for the prohibitions contained in their law are not such as can have any effect on their stature, their features, or their complexion. They follow a variety of professions and employments: many of them are wealthy merchants, having a fixed residence in populous and commercial cities: others, engaged in a great variety of inferior branches of traffic, lead a wandering life; and in some countries, as Lithuania, Courland, &c. great numbers of them are agriculturists. Although they rigidly adhere to their peculiar institutions these relate wholly to religious matters: in all other respects they are subject to foreign governments and foreign laws, which are very different in the different countries where they are settled. But in every climate, in every profession and station of life, under every government and every system of legislation, amidst every variety of physical and moral circumstances, the jews preserve, in their external appearance, incon-

testible evidences of the race to which they belong.

This characteristic distinction by which the jews are so easily recognized, can be ascribed only to their almost invariable custom of intermarrying among themselves, which preserves the race pure and unmixed. The justness of this conclusion appears from an indisputable circumstance; for it has constantly been observed, that whenever any of those people have become converts, and formed family alliances with the nations among whom they are settled, the distinctive marks of their race are soon obliterated. A proof of the perpetuation of those characteristic distinctions, unless when effaced by mixture of breed, may be adduced from what a late traveller says of the Afghans, whose incursions and victories have rendered their names terrible in the annals of Hindostan, and whose princes sat a long time on the throne of Delhi. These people claim their descent from a jewish stock, and had long been seated in Cashinire and the adjacent parts of Little Bocharia. Their numerous adventurers, who at different periods have opened way with their swords into India and Persia, are mixed with the native inhabitants of those countries; but in their original seats they still discover the distinctive marks of their race: and Mr. Forster was so struck with the genera-

appearance of the Cashmerians, as to be almost inclined to imagine that he had been suddenly transported amongst a nation of jews.*

In almost every part of India, the different casts into which the people are divided, exhibit in their external organization and appearance certain peculiar characteristics. The professions and pursuits of the different casts are in a great measure confounded in consequence of the wars, the civil commotions, and scenes of anarchy which have so long prevailed. The Bramins have taken up the sword and are seen in the ranks of an army: the Kettry, a warrior tribe, engage occasionally in traffic: and the Sooders have acquired principalities. But intermarriages between separate casts are still rare: each tribe has a distinct feature, and the lineaments of the countenance as well as the form of body seems to indicate a particular family.†

Almost every part of the world, and every portion of mankind, afford convincing proofs that a family or tribe, remaining without any intermixture with others, will assume and perpetuate a peculiar appearance. The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, describes the shrill voice, the uncouth gestures,

* Forster's Travels, v. 2. p. 21.

† Chatfield's Hist. Rev. of Hindostan, p. 165.

and the strange deformity of the Huns: "These savages of Scythia," says he, "were compared, and the picture had some resemblance, to the animals that walk very awkwardly on two legs, and to the mis-shapen figures the Termini, which were often placed on the bridges of antiquity. They were distinguished from the rest of the human species by their broad shoulders, flat noses, and small black eyes deeply buried in the head; and as they were almost destitute of beards, they never possessed either the manly graces of youth, or the venerable aspect of age."* Gibbon here refers to the authority of Ammianus Marcellinus,† and of Jornandes, who in describing them seems to delineate a caricature of a Calmuc face. Their ugliness was such that a tradition of the Goths ascribed their origin to the amours of witches and demons who had met in the deserts.‡ Montesquieu, who, as well as many other writers, considered the Turks and the Huns as the same nation, says that the Turks were the ugliest people upon earth, and that their women were as frightful as the men.§

* Gibbon's Dec. and Fall of the Rom. Emp. v. 4, 8vo. chap. 26, p. 375.

† Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. 31. chap. 1.

‡ Gibbon ubi supra. Montesquieu Grandeur et Decadence des Romains, ch. 28. p. 225.,

§ Montesquieu ubi supra.

Such was the exterior appearance of the Hunnish and Tartar nations, when issuing from their original seats on the northern and north western frontiers of China, and traversing the vast regions of central Asia, they at length approached the civilized countries of Europe.* Their conquests introduced a mixture of breed by which their shape, their features, and complexion were gradually improved. China, during a considerable space of time, groaned under their oppression, and contributed to the improvement of their race. The Huns, regarding their own women only as instruments of domestic labour, their desires or rather their appetites were directed to the enjoyment of more elegant beauty. A select band of the fairest maidens of China was annually devoted to their rude embraces, and the alliance of the Hunnish kings was secured by their marriage with the daughters of the imperial family.†

The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ascribes the improvement of the Hunnish race to other circumstances, as well as to mixture of blood. When the power of that people was broken, towards the close of the first century, by their wars with the Chinese and the Siempi, and by the defection

* For the progress of the Huns through the vast regions of Tartary, see De Guigne's *Hist. des Huns*, tom. 2.

† De Guigne's *Hist. des Huns*, tom. 2. p. 62.

of their vassal tribes, two formidable divisions refusing to submit to their conquerors, directed their course one towards the Oxus, and the other towards the Volga. The first of these colonies established their dominion in the extensive plains of Sogdiana, on the eastern side of the Caspian sea. "Their manners," says Mr. Gibbon, "were softened and even their features were insensibly improved by the mildness of the climate, and their long residence in a flourishing province."* But the same historian, speaking of the Alani, who were seated between the Don and the Volga, says, "The mixture of Sarmatic and German blood had contributed to improve the features of the Alani, to whiten their swarthy complexions, and to tinge their hair with a yellowish hue, which is seldom found in the Tartar race."† In the case of the Huns, Mr. Gibbon here ascribes the improvement of their exterior to the influence of climate and civilization: in regard to the Alani, he refers it to mixture of blood: all these causes might concur in producing the same effect; but the last is undoubtedly the most powerful. A mild climate, and the comforts of civilized life, have an undoubted tendency to improve both the com-

* Gibbon's Dec. Rom. Emp. v. 4. ch. 26. p. 368.

† Ibid Dec. Rom. Emp. v. 4. ch. 26. 373.

flexion and features as excessive heat or cold, severe hardships, and long continued labour, darken the skin, and give a harshness and rigidity to the lineaments of the face. But it is proved by experience, that attention to breed is the most effectual means of removing blemishes, or perpetuating desirable qualities in every kind of animal: and, reasoning from analogy, there is no great danger of error in concluding that the same cause must produce, at least, in a considerable degree, similar effects on the human species. In this manner indeed, the Turks and Persians, both of whom appear to have been originally of a very disagreeable exterior, have so greatly improved their race by their continual mixture, during long succession of ages, with Circasian, Georgian, and other slaves, that they are now the two handsomest nations of Asia, and little inferior in beauty to Europeans.*

The reasonings of philosophy, the history of mankind, and the discoveries of the medical art, all concur to shew that various peculiarities in the human frame and constitution are transmissible by hereditary descent. Physicians know this to be the case with several of the most dreadful diseases to which the species

* Herodot. lib. 3. chap. 97. Buffon's Hist. Nat. tom. 3. p. 420. Herodotus says that even in the time of Xerxes, the Persians were not inferior to the Greeks in courage and strength.

is liable;* and the same observation may often be made on the different qualities and powers both of the body and the mind. Some of these peculiarities, which seem to be attached to particular tribes, may perhaps be originally owing to climate, food, and mode of life; but when once formed, they are transmitted from one generation to another, and often subsist for a long time after the combination of circumstances by which they were produced has ceased to exist. But the greater number of these distinctions appear to arise from accident;† for we may sometimes perceive among a family of children a difference of strength, beauty, and intellect, for which it is impossible to assign any cause. These differences, when not obliterated by mixture and breed, may among men as well as among brutes be perpetuated, and at length become characteristic marks of families and tribes. Nothing but the hereditary transmission of these peculiarities, which may at first be deemed accidental, could occasion the difference of external appearance observable

* Among those may be reckoned the scrofula, gout, insanity, &c. several other disorders. The idocy of the Cretins, in the Valais, &c. are mentioned in chap 2, is also perpetuated in hereditary descent with an unfailing certainty.

† By accident is here meant some circumstance for which philosophers cannot account: as no effect can exist without a cause, nothing can happen by mere chance, which is a word used to cover human ignorance.

amongst the Scottish clans, who subsist on the same kind of food, live under the same climate, and have from time immemorial been surrounded by the same moral as well as physical circumstances.*

This hypothesis may be illustrated by a suppositious example. If several pairs of the human species were placed in countries under the same climate, and furnishing the same kind of food, but each pair entirely cut off from all intercourse with the rest of mankind, the families that would be raised, in such circumstances, would be easily distinguishable from each other in external appearance, and perhaps also in intellect. If the original parents of one of these families should excel in strength, those of another in beauty, if, in fine, each of the separate pairs here supposed were distinguished by any remarkable qualities or defects, either corporeal or mental, it is more than probable that these distinctions would be perpetuated amongst their descendants, and become characteristics of their different tribes. In the primeval world during the patriarchal ages, it was the general custom to intermarry with persons of the same family, and accidental peculiarities being thus perpetuated, the dis-

* See Dr. Anderson's observations on the characteristic distinctions of the Scottish clans. *Recreations*, v. 1. p. 70 and 71, already quoted.

inctions of race probably arose from that circumstance.

Whether intellectual as well as corporeal differences be thus transmitted and perpetuated, it may appear to some a question of difficult solution. If we could give credit to the fanciful theory of Dr. Gall, we should readily answer it in the affirmative.* The principle of his hypothesis is, that the capacities and inclinations of the different kinds of animals, and also of men, are strong or weak in proportion to the largeness or smallness of the brain in comparison with the other parts of the body. The Cretins of the Valais, have a far less quantity of brain than other men. Dr. Gall compared the skull of an old woman who had been an idiot from her infancy, with that of a man distinguished by his talents; and he found the latter to be twice as large as the former. According to the doctor's hypothesis, the germ of every intellectual faculty as well as of every corporeal organ is in the foetus, and consequently as transmissible in a family or tribe, as the traits of the countenance and

* Dr. Gall, of Vienna, employed twenty-years, and expended a large fortune in making his collections of skulls, heads of plaster, brains of wax, &c. But about the close of the year 1801, his lectures were prohibited by the Austrian government, as tending towards materialism. His opinions have a great many abettors among the German physicians and philosophers.

other peculiarities of the exterior appearance.* If this could be proved, the conclusion would necessarily be, that the distinctions of race would have a far more decided influence on the human species, than any of the other physical or moral circumstances, which, in all their endless variety of combinations, operate on man through the whole course of his existence; for Dr. Gall expressly asserts, that external circumstances may either impede or favour the developement of the organs of mental agency, but cannot in any wise change their nature.†

But without adopting the doctrines of this ingenious and fanciful philosopher, we must still admit the indications of observation and experience.‡ It is well known that diseases

+ “Le germe de l'organe futur de la penetration ou de l'imagination est aussi bien dans le fœtus qui vient de se former dans le sein de la mere que le germe de l'oreille, du nez, &c. et que le germe de l'arbre est dans le noyau.” “The germ of the future organ of penetration or imagination is as really in the fœtus, which is formed in the womb of the mother, as the germ of the ear, the nose, &c. and as the germ of the tree is in the kernel of its fruit.” *Exposition de la Doctrine du Docteur Gall*, chap. 3. p. 35.

† “Les circonstances, exterieures pourront en contrarier ou favoriser le developpement, mais nullement en changer la nature.” *Exposition de la Doctrine du Docteur Gall*, ubi supra.

‡ During the space of near thirty years employed in the instruction of youth, the author has frequently observed that in some families, genius and penetration seemed to be in a great measure hereditary, while in others a degree of dullness and stupidity appeared to be prevalent. In these cases, however, generally admitted of individual exceptions.

and defects of the mind from whatever causes they may proceed, are often transmitted to descendants, as well as those of the body. This is frequently the case with idiotism, and every species of insanity, of which the Cretins of the Vallais are a melancholy instance. It is evident that the intellectual imbecillity of these unfortunate people originates in some unknown property of the climate; but experience proves it to be transmitted by hereditary descent to their posterity. They were formerly permitted to marry, and have consequently become a distinct race, existing in the same melancholy state through several generations.*

In comparing the Europeans, the northern and southern Asiatics, the southern Africans, and the aboriginal Americans, there appears to be a visible distinction of races.† Although the varieties of complexion may be ascribed to climate and modes of life, yet the differences that are seen in their features and bodily structure, can scarcely be ascribed to these

* Coxe's Trav. in Switzerland, v. 1. p. 385, &c.

† The Hottentots and the Caffres, although so near neighbours, have all the appearances of distinct races. And it is impossible, in viewing the Bojesmans, not to consider them as a race entirely distinct from all others. They seem to have sprung from parents originally defective in size and shape; they are scarcely four feet high, and their lank and deformed limbs give them a singular appearance. Lichtenstein's Trav. p. 117.

causes. It is difficult indeed to account for that singular shape of the eye, and some other peculiarities which characterise a Chinese and Tartar physiognomy without considering them as the marks of a particular race, and perpetuated in hereditary descent.* These observations might be extended to the negroes of Guinea, to the aborigines of America, and to several other nations, in whom the difference of exterior appearance can scarcely be ascribed to differences either in climate or food, or to any other causes physical or moral, except distinction of race.†

But among the nations of Europe, at least we except the Laplanders and some of the Russian tribes, all distinctions of this kind are annihilated by a general intermixture, occasioned in early times by almost incessant revo-

* See Barrow's China, p. 48. &c. The curious reader may here be referred to an "Essay on the causes of the variety of complexion and figure in the human species," delivered in the annual oration before the Philosophical society of Philadelphia, 28th Feb. 1787. By the Rev. Samuel Stanhope Smith, D. D. Little regard indeed is paid to race: it is attributed to climate and moral habits. The disquisitions are serious although sometimes carried to too high a pitch of refinement, and containing much assumption scarcely susceptible of proof.

† Mr. Winterbottom has a curious dissertation on the causes of the black complexion of the negroes. See Account of the Africans, ch. 12. 181. &c. This attempt, however, to account for so remarkable a phenomenon, is not more successful than that of the Abbé Raynal. From Winterbottom's account, it appears that the negroes are divided into distinct races, and that the flat nose, thick lips, &c. are not common to all of them. P. 197.

lutions, and afterwards increased by commercial communication. The ancient Greeks and Romans were a mixture of Egyptians and Phœnicians, with Celts or Cimmerians. The conquests of the Romans, and still more the subversion of their empire, were events that greatly promoted the mixture of the European nations. The Franks and the Saxons, the ancestors of the modern French and English, came from the north western parts of Germany, and might be regarded as kindred tribes. These became blended with the Gauls, Burgundians, Goths, Romans, Britons, and Normans. The Spaniards are a mixture of Carthaginians, Romans, Goths, and Arabians, blended with the aboriginal tribes; and the Italians are descended from Romans, Goths, and Lombards. These intermixtures, indeed, have been so frequent and numerous, that among the European nations, all distinctions of race, which might once have existed, are long since confounded and lost in the general amalgamation.

CHAP. V.

MORAL CAUSES.

GOVERNMENT.

THE history of the human species tends to shew, that whatever may be the effects of situation, climate, food, or race, in certain extreme cases, there are moral causes which have generally a much greater share in forming the manners of men and the character of nations, than any physical circumstances in which they are placed. Of all these moral causes which have so decided an influence on human nature, the most powerful are government and religion. Which of these operates with the greatest force, is a question not very easy to determine. But as the grand objects of government relate to the present life, while the views of religion

are directed to a world to come, the agency of the former is more prompt as well as more visible; and therefore its effects ought to be first brought under consideration.

It is the opinion of several writers of eminence, that national character depends wholly on political constitution. The learned and ingenious author of the "History of the Italian Republics of the Middle Ages," says, "That the virtues or the vices of nations, their energy or their effeminacy, their talents, their knowledge, or their ignorance, are scarcely ever the effects of climate, or the attributes or endowments of a particular race, but the production of the laws: that all things were given to all men by nature; but, that government either takes away from or guarantees to its subjects the common inheritance of the human species." After bidding us compare the state and character of the Italians in different periods of their history, he says, "The same soil has nourished those beings so different in their nature; and the same blood circulates in their veins. The mixture of some barbarian hordes lost amidst the mass of indigenous inhabitants could not be sufficient to change the physical constitution of the people of that country."

* J. C. L. Simonde Sisimondi *Histoire des Republiques Italiennes du Moyen Age*. Introd. p. 1.

Nature has been the same for the Italians in all ages : their government alone has changed : and its revolutions have always preceded or accompanied the changes in their national character.”* If, indeed, we contemplate the character of the Italians in the flourishing times of the Roman republic, that of the Greeks during the period which elapsed from the first Persian war to the reign of Philip of Macedonia, that of the Arabians under the first Caliphs, and consider the present degeneracy of these celebrated nations, we shall easily perceive that, although physical circumstances may sometimes have a great share in determining the different mode of human existence, there are certain moral causes which have a more powerful influence on mind and manners, than all the variety of climate that is found between the equator and the polar circles.

It has been assumed as an incontrovertible fact, that indolence is the distinguishing characteristic of the inhabitants of southern Asia, that it necessarily proceeds from the heat of the country, and that the inertness of body, origi-

* Le melange de quelques peuplades barbares perdues au milieu des peuples indigenes n'a point suffi pour changer la constitution physique des hommes qu'enfantait la meme region. La nature est restee la meme pour les Italiens de tous les ages : le gouvernement seul a changé, et ses revolutions ont toujours precedé ou accompagné l'alteration du caractere national. Sismondi Hist. des Repub. Ital. du Moyen Age, Intro. J. &c.

nating from the climate, must produce a corresponding disposition of mind. Considering despotism as an effect of the supineness of a people, some writers of distinguished abilities conclude that it is the system of government natural to the climate. This opinion has found, from the celebrity of its author, Montesquieu, a considerable number of followers. The people of hot countries, say they, do not possess those energies, that activity and vigour of mind which in cooler climates prompt mankind to investigate their natural rights, and to maintain the balance of political freedom, all their inclinations are passive, indolence constitutes their chief happiness, and they scarcely consider any punishment so severe as that exertion of body and mind which is necessary for the vigour of human action.*

The history of mankind, however, controverts and confutes this theory ; for the inhabitants of warm as well as of cold countries, have fought and bled for liberty and independence. The Greeks and the Arabians shone equally in arts and in arms. But where are now the heroes of Sparta and Athens—of the fields of Platea and Marathon? And why are the Arabian xeriffs and sheiks no longer recogni-

* Montesquieu *Esprit des lois* liv. 14. chap. 3. and liv. 21. chap. 3. Volney is of a different opinion, see Volney's *Syria*, vol. 2. p. 462—470.

able as the representatives of Mahomed, Omar, Abubekar, Ali, and of their famous lieutenants, Caled, Obeidah, Amrou, &c.? Genius, arts, literature, and liberty, flourished in their full splendour under the warm skies of Greece, Asia Minor, and Italy, when they were wholly unknown in higher latitudes,—a proof that the human powers and the energy of a nation are not to be estimated by the temperature of climate, nor fixed by the varying scale of the thermometer. Public events and social institutions are in general the efficient causes that limit or extend the activity of men.* The same causes that have degraded several countries of Europe and western Asia, have had an equal effect on the nations of the east. What is now seen of the Greeks, the Arabians, and the Hindoos, are only the wrecks of great nations, buried for centuries in ruin and disgrace. But the Hindoos are not so completely degraded as the Greeks: accumulated oppression has bowed them down; but it has not completely extinguished their spirit. In the most flourishing period of the Mogul empire, many of the Rajpoot princes bravely asserted their independence, and extorted either fear or respect from their enemies.

* Vide Volney's Syria, vol. 2. p. 473, &c.

Egypt and Chaldea were, in the ages of remote antiquity, the cradle of the arts and sciences. The Babylonians* first, and the Persians afterwards, were the masters of the then known and civilized world. In the age of Pericles, and for some time before, Athens shone forth in all her splendour, the mistress of Greece, the terror of Persia, and the instructress of mankind, the last of which honors she long maintained. Rome attained to the sovereignty of the world ; and while all nations trembled at her name, she diffused her arts, her language, and her learning as far as she extended her conquests. Let us for a moment observe the contrast between the ancient and present state of these celebrated nations: Egypt is now in the lowest state of degradation and ignorance. The Babylonians have no national existence : nothing of that great people remains but the name ; and even the place where Babylon stood, can scarcely be ascertained. Persia sunk into poverty, weakness, and obscurity, possesses but little political importance. Athens is dwindled down into a paltry provincial town ; and all Greece in a state of the most abject slavery, is no

* Babylon and Chaldea once formed a part of the Assyrian empire but at length revolted and became an independent monarchy. In this sketch, I have therefore considered the Assyrians and Babylonians as the same people ; and they are commonly regarded as such by historians.

longer the country of philosophers and heroes. Italy, once the mistress of the world, is now a prey to every foreign invader. Such is at present the state of the most famous nations of antiquity, while Germany, Gaul, and Britain, countries which the Greeks and Romans justly regarded as the seats of barbarian ignorance, are now the favourite abode of the muses, the centre of literature, science, and civilization.* In all these countries nature remains unchanged. The same beautiful scenery adorns the prospects in Greece and Ionia as that which charmed the eye and the mind in those delightful countries twenty-two centuries ago: the productions of their soil are still of the same kind; and the same golden sunshine illumines their skies.

Since the physical circumstances of these nations remains unchanged, the origin of the revolutions which have taken place in their genius and character, must be sought in the multiplied combinations of moral causes, the complicated results of political events and social institutions. Of these, government appears to be the most prompt and most powerful; and some writers attribute

* "Londres jadis barbare est le centre des arts,

"Le magasin du monde et le temple de Mars."

Voltaire *Henriade*.

"London, formerly barbarous, is the centre of the arts,

"The magazine of the world, and the temple of Mars."

to its influence every circumstance in the state and destiny of nations. "The more one sees," says an observing traveller, "the more I believe we shall be led to think that there is but one all-powerful cause that instigates mankind, and that is government. Others form exceptions and give shades of difference and distinction; but this acts with permanent and universal force."*

The learned and ingenious author of the *Divine Legation of Moses* seems to think that men were first induced to unite in society for the sake of mutual protection and safety.† But even without this inducement man naturally delights to act in conjunction with men, is ambitious of distinction under their eye, and proud of their approbation. Hence arise emulation and competition, the two principal sources of the most illustrious actions, as well as sometimes of the greatest crimes.‡ Man is by nature a social animal, and "Although a sense of mutual wants and mutual aid, did not dictate the necessity of civil union and cohabitation, yet would mankind herd and live together."§ But as it is

* A. Young's Tour in France, Journ. 21st July, 1787.

† Dr. Warburton's *Divine Legat. of Moses*, book 1, sect. 2. &c.

‡ Man is born with this inclination, to associate. It is an appetite common to all the human species. Strabo Geog. lib. 16.

§ Aristotle Polit. lib. 3. chap. 4. Apud. Russell's Hist. Anct. Europe, vol. 1. p. 7.

impossible that men should live in a social state without imposing some restraints on the appetites and passions of individuals when operating in a manner prejudicial to the community, a degree of coercion became absolutely necessary. If, therefore, the want of mutual protection was not the first motive that impelled men to unite in society, it was certainly the chief cause that induced them to submit to the authority and restraints of government.

The origin and progress of civil society and government is sketched with a masterly hand by Dr. Russell. "As the first social connexion is that of husband and wife, the first civil superiority is that of a father over his family. Nature therefore directs us to patriarchal rule as the original government among men. For although a father has no natural right to govern his sons after they have attained the years of manhood, they will find it necessary to recur to some person for the arbitration of their common differences. And who is so likely to be chosen for that purpose as their common parent? They have been habituated in infancy to submit to his authority: he has settled their boyish disputes, and they have wondered at the strength of his understanding, while their own was weak. Early impressions are not easily eradicated. His counsel is sought, and to him they are led to appeal, not only

from a persuasion of his superior wisdom, but from a conviction that his decisions will be just ; because he is equally concerned in the welfare of all. To him, as their common head, his offspring look up ; and he exercises, during life, the joint offices of governor and judge.”

“The farther progress of government it is now more difficult to trace. Families naturally grew up into tribes, held together by common consanguinity, and of which the head of the eldest family in each tribe was revered as the chief. When they were exposed to danger from foreign enemies, or induced by considerations of mutual advantage, two or more tribes united into one body, and composed a nation or state. In the new community, which generally formed a rude republic, some man of superior sagacity in council or superior prowess in war never failed to gain the ascendant ; and when these qualities happened to be combined in the same person, he was not only intrusted with the command of the forces of the state, but took the lead in all public deliberations. With or without the forms of election, he was constituted chief magistrate and captain-general for life. A portion of the respect for the father was naturally transferred to the son. He usually possessed the same elevated station. With office, wealth and influence accumulated, and the chief magistracy became hereditary.

thus was one family raised above others, and monarchy gradually formed.”*

From the nature of things, the patriarchal form of government could not be of long duration. In proportion as the number of individuals composing a tribe was augmented, the authority of its paternal chief would be gradually weakened, and in a short time almost annihilated. Ambitious and enterprising men, possessed of abilities and desirous of power, would aspire to the supreme authority, and then the progress of government would be such as Dr. Russell has described. The two grand sources of influence in society, are personal talents and property. While men were in the savage or even in the semi-barbarous state, personal strength and courage were the only talents held in esteem, and those which laid the foundation of all superiority. In the primeval ages these qualities were of the greatest utility, not only to clear the countries, where colonies were planted, from wild and voracious animals, but to protect the peaceable part of mankind from plunderers and assassins, who abounded in consequence of the inefficiency of the laws, or the want of civil institutions.

* Russell's *Hist. Anct. Europe*, vol. 1. p. 35. &c.

In process of time as men became more enlightened, mental qualifications were discovered to be not only useful, but absolutely necessary in those who aspired to rule over tribes and communities. A clear understanding and sound judgment were found to be as essentially requisite as bodily strength ; and the persons in whom these qualities were the most conspicuously united, would be naturally chosen as the head of the society, and the chief administrators of its affairs. But virtue and talents are not hereditary. In the natural course of things, therefore, the office of chief or leader would in every petty state at first be elective. But wealth may descend to a successor ; and in the progress of society the influence of property, gradually acquiring strength, soon overwhelms that of personal merit. This circumstance could not fail of giving rise to numerous disorders. Some would consider their superior talents as affording a just claim to supremacy in power : others would regard their wealth or the share of the national property which they possessed, as entitling them to a superior influence in directing the affairs of the state. In proportion as communities increased in wealth, population and territorial extent, civilization brought in her train, illumination of intellect ; the number of persons of merit as well as of persons of

fortune was gradually augmented ; and as the supreme power began then to be surrounded with pomp and splendour, it became the most tempting object of ambition to those who could entertain any hopes of its attainment. This gave rise to innumerable factions, let loose the passions of ambition, involved nations in civil wars, caused perpetual revolutions of governments and dynasties, and introduced a train of convulsions which threatened the dissolution of civilized society. The picture here drawn is not merely imaginary : its original exists in human nature and social circumstances ; and history attests the truth of its semblance.

In order to remedy evils of so tremendous a magnitude and of so frequent recurrence, some expedient was necessary ; and none could be better calculated for the purpose than that of making the supreme power to descend in hereditary succession. The superior prerogative of birth, when it has obtained the sanction of the people and popular opinion, is the plainest and least invidious of all distinctions among mankind. The acknowledged right extinguishes the hopes of faction ; and the conscious security which it affords disarms the cruelty of the monarch. To the firm establishment of this we are owing the peaceful succession and the administration of European monarchies :

to the defect of it must be ascribed the frequent civil wars through which an Asiatic despot is obliged to cut his way to the throne of his fathers, and the bloody proscriptions by which he generally establishes his authority and maintains himself in his situation.

In all countries the first legislative regulations must have been of a general nature and very concise. As communities advanced in civilization, they began to require a more expanded system of laws; and government at the same time gaining strength, the legislators, desirous of confirming or extending their power, would take a wider survey of society and a more exact aim in their political regulations. Accumulated experience, resulting from the incessant occurrence of novel circumstances, would naturally extend their views, and having too often before their eyes the dangers arising from a tumultuary and uncontrolled state of society, they would set an exaggerated value on a system of rigorous coercion. Thus forgetting, or at least overlooking the evils that must arise from the destruction of individual freedom, their grand object was to plan and carry into effect a scheme of permanent control and complex superintendence. In those early periods when nations were only emerging from barbarism to a state of semi-civilization, it was necessary:

watch with a jealous eye, and repress with a forcible hand, those tumultuary movements of popular licentiousness, from which society had much more to fear than from any restraints imposed by the governing power. These circumstances and considerations naturally led to the establishment of despotism. But as civilization advanced, the excess of control began to be unnecessary and to be felt as a grievance. In proportion as the human intellect expanded, and men began to understand their natural rights and common interests, a more liberal system of legislation was introduced. To attain this object, some communities changed the monarchical for a republican government, which often proved more tyrannical than the regal power.

One of the first and most necessary objects that attracted the attention of nations in their progress towards civilization, was the division of land. Until this took place, government could have little hold on the people. The possession and enjoyment of property bind the affections of a civilized people to an improved country. Pastoral tribes wandering about rough uncultivated regions could have none of those local attachments which arise from social circumstances, and attract the minds of men to their natal soil. The political union of long members of the same community

is rendered more close by an apprehension of danger from abroad, and the intercourse between them more general from a sense of mutual conveniency. Hence arose patriotic and internal traffic, the two great and original sources of civilization and national prosperity. Men acquired a peculiar affection for their native country and for their fellow citizens soon after the division and appropriation of lands, in consequence of their common struggles to defend their cultivated possessions against the ravages of barbarous and hostile neighbours.* The ancient legislators, therefore, wisely considered the division of lands as the parent of social order, in making each man the guardian of his own property, and the magistrate the guardian of all, by the regulations which became necessary.†

The time and particular manner in which the division and individual appropriation of lands took place in different countries, may be numbered amongst the things over which antiquity has thrown an impenetrable veil. The sacred writings give a luminous description of the manner in which the conquered country of Canaan was divided among the victorious Hebrews; and profane history relates what

* Russell's Hist. Anct. Europe, vol. 1. p. 12.

† Mem de l'Acad. des Inscript. tom. 1. p. 50. &c.

recision the division of the lands of Sparta and Rome. But it does not appear that any of these were primitive divisions, unless we may suppose that until the building of Rome, the seven hills, and the marshy plains adjoining the Tiber, were waste and unappropriated grounds; for scriptural history affords sufficient evidence that the appropriation of the soil had taken place in Canaan long before the conquest of the country by the Israelites; and there is no doubt that the lands of Lacedæmon were divided before the time of Lycurgus. That celebrated legislator divided them into thirty-nine thousand portions, according to the number of citizens, nine thousand of whom resided in the city of Lacedæmon, and all the rest in the country. Romulus divided the Roman territory, which was then of a very small extent, among all the people, at the rate of two acres for each citizen. In fine, all the republics of antiquity were founded on agrarian laws, which, however, soon became inefficient and obsolete.

Amongst the ancient Germans the lands were public property, and the part to be appropriated to tillage was annually determined in their national assemblies. They had no cities nor towns; nor were their dwellings contiguous. They lived in a dispersed state, spread over the country, and fixed their habi-

tions in the places which they esteemed the most agreeable.* In such a state of society their chiefs could possess little power and authority ; and Tacitus expatiates on the subject of German freedom.† It is certain, indeed, that the possessions and desires of subjects are the only pledges of their obedience to government.

The distinction and power of the chiefs of ancient Germany consisted in being attended by numerous bands of chosen youth. They gained and preserved the favour of these retainers by presents of armour and horses, and generally the fruits of their predatory wars, and by the profuse though inelegant hospitality with which they entertained them.‡ Indeed they had nothing else to bestow, nor could those youthful warriors have any higher object of ambition, in a country where the soil was common property, and the luxuries of civilized life were unknown.

But after the division and appropriation of the lands, the chiefs could bestow more substantial rewards on their followers. Lands were of no value unless they were cultivated, nor could the possession of them be secure

* Tacit. de Morib. German, chap. 43.

† Tacit. de Morib. German, chap. 44.

‡ Tacit. de Morib. German, chap. 14 15.

without placing them in the hands of numerous defenders. These considerations gave rise, in process of time, to the feudal system, with all its subdivisions and gradations.

Theories are the least subject to error when they rest on the basis of facts; and in morals as well as in physics, instruction is the most easily conveyed by example. In attempting, therefore, to estimate the influence of political systems, it is requisite to cast a slight glance at a few of the most celebrated governments of ancient and modern times, and to observe the effects which they produced on national character and circumstances. Of the political systems of antiquity, those of Athens, Sparta, and Rome, are the best known, and possess the strongest claim to attention. In these famous republics, the powers of government were vested in the assembly of the citizens; but a senate or supreme council of state planned and proposed every public measure.

The senate of Athens, as established by Solon, was composed of four hundred members. But a few years before the first Persian war their number was increased to five hundred, viz. fifty from each of the ten tribes. At the same time the law of ostracism was enacted—a law by which the majority of the Athenians in the popular assembly could banish for ten years; but without confiscation of property

any powerful or ambitious citizen by writing his name upon shells, provided that the number of those on which his name was inscribed amounted to six thousand. When it was proposed to banish any one by this law, his friends used to impeach some of his reputed enemies in order to divide the votes and prevent the majority from amounting to the number required.* By this extraordinary law, which subjected persons to punishment without being guilty of any crime, many of the most virtuous citizens of Athens became the victims of political jealousy, and were driven into exile through the machinations of their enemies or the caprice of the people.

In Athens, the citizens, of whom the number appears to have never exceeded thirty-six thousand, were divided into classes according to the annual income of their estates. By this regulation, an open field was left for emulation and hope, as a citizen of an inferior class might by industry and frugality advance himself to the highest, and obtain all the offices and honours which it was entitled to claim. The senate examined and approved all measures before they could be proposed to the assembly of the people. But to the collective body of the Athenian citizens legally convened be

* Plutarch Vita Aristid. and Vita Themist.

onged not only the right of electing and judging the magistrates and ministers who were intrusted for a limited time with the public authority, but also the power of ultimately deciding in all cases, legislative, executive, and judicial, of contracting or dissolving alliances, of making war and of concluding peace. Such a political constitution, in which talents conferred the highest distinction, and popularity alone was the way to honour and power, afforded the most ample scope to emulation and to all the efforts of genius ; but at the same time it opened the doors to licentiousness, corruption, ambition, and to almost every kind of disorder that can agitate a nation or community.

The whole history of this celebrated republic exhibits only one continued series of rashness, folly, ingratitude, injustice, tumult, violence, and tyranny, and indeed of every species of wickedness that can be imagined. "This," says an eminent British senator, "is the city which banished Themistocles, forced into exile Alcibiades, drove out Anaxagoras, and poisoned Socrates. This was the city that changed the form of its government with the moon : eternal conspiracies, daily revolutions : nothing fixed and established."* At Athens the most stu-

* Burke's Works, vol. 1. p. 51.

died behaviour was not a sufficient guard for man of great capacity. Some of the bravest Athenian commanders were obliged to fly their country, and some to enter into the service of their enemies rather than abide a popular decision on their conduct. ✱

That the political constitution of Athens was highly favourable to the developement of her talents and to the improvement of the human mind, the number of her great men, and the proficiency in letters, in arts, and in arms, which her citizens so rapidly attained, are indisputable evidences; but its tendency to promote popular licentiousness is proved by their constant progress towards the most enormous excesses. The people, under no restraint, grew idle and dissolute. They renounced all labour, and began to convert the public revenues to their own private use. They lost all concern for their common honour and safety, and could bear no advice that tended to a reformation. "Truth became offensive to those lords, the people, and highly dangerous to the speaker. The orators no longer ascended the rostrum but to corrupt them still further with the most fulsome adulation. These orators were all bribed by foreign princes, and devoted to their interest. And besides its own parties, in this city, there were parties, and avowed ones too, for the Persian

Spartans, and Macedonians, each of them supported by one or more demagogues pensioned and bribed to this iniquitous service.”* A system so corrupt could not be of long duration.

The Spartan constitution, as modelled by Lycurgus, was a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, in which, however, the latter appears to have been the most prevalent. There were two kings who had the executive power. They were the first citizens of the state, the perpetual presidents of the senate, and commanders of the armies.† The senate was elective, and consisted of twenty-eight members. Nothing could come before the assembly of the people which had not previously received the approbation of the senate, and no judgment of the senate was effectual without the sanction of the people. The senate alone, had the right of proposing and deliberating on public measures : no debate of that kind could originate in the popular assemblies. But to the people belonged the power of discussing the measures proposed, and of ultimately ratifying or negating every resolution of the senate.‡ The ephori were five annual magis-

* Burke's Works, ubi supra. Mr. Kirwan observes, that “The condition of every class of the inhabitants of Attica was miserable, and that the Athenian commonwealth can at most be deemed only semi-civilized. Essay on Human Happiness, p. 95.

† Plutarch Vita Lycurgi. Herodot. lib. 6. Plato de Leg. lib. 3.

‡ Xenophon Repub. Lacon. Plutarch Vita Lycurgi.

trates elected by the people to protect their rights and watch over the administration. They convened and dissolved the popular assemblies, and could expel, imprison, or put to death any obnoxious senator ; so that they possessed a power in some respects subordinate in others superior to that of the kings.* The Athenian and Spartan governments rested on the same basis of popular power, except in the institution of the regal office, which, since the reign of Codrus, had never existed at Athens, and was indeed greatly checked at Lacedæmon by the authority and power of the ephori, who had the chief management of that dangerous engine, the people. But although the constitutional basis of these two celebrated states was nearly the same, their laws were totally different, and gave an entirely different character to their citizens. ✕

ⓔ Lycurgus appears to have had no other object in view than to form a community, in which every idea of private comfort and happiness should be absorbed in the sentiment of public safety and glory. In order to maintain equality among the citizens, and to prevent the accumulation of private wealth, he prohibited the use of gold and silver, and allowed iron money only to be coined ; and that luxury

* Xenophon ubi supra.

rious indulgence might not tempt to the acquisition of wealth, he ordered all the male citizens to eat at public tables : fifteen being joined in a mess, each contributing his quota to the common meal, which always consisted of the coarsest kind of victuals. He committed the labours of husbandry and the exercise of all mechanic arts solely to slaves, and permitted the free citizens to follow no other profession than those of the magistracy and arms. He enjoined marriage as a duty ; but none were allowed to marry before they had attained the full age of maturity, a regulation calculated to promote the production of a strong and healthy offspring. Women, like all other property, were held common in Sparta. Husbands were required, in certain circumstances, to lend their wives to others, when it was deemed necessary for the purpose of improving the breed. All children, as soon as they were born, were ordered to be brought to a public office to be examined by persons appointed for that purpose, and those that appeared to be deformed, feeble, or diseased, were thrown into a deep cavern ; but such as were well shaped, strong, and healthy, were delivered to nurses provided by the state. At seven years of age, the boys were placed under public preceptors, no Spartan being permitted to bring up or educate his own children. The

grand object of these preceptors was to render them bold, vigilant, and skilful warriors, to inspire them with a high sense of honour, a desire of applause and apprehension of disgrace, to inculcate a love of their country superior to every other consideration, and to mould their passions, sentiments, and ideas, to the genius of the constitution.

It was not the male sex alone that was subject to this severe mode of training. The Lacedæmonian virgins, instead of the sedentary employments of the needle, were obliged to occupy themselves like the young men, in running, wrestling, throwing the quoit or javelin, and other vigorous exercises. The obligation was imposed on the females in order to give them a robust frame of body, and render them fit to produce strong and healthy children; and these exercises they generally performed in a state of nudity, in order to add suppleness to strength, and to give vigour and tone to the fibres.

No system of laws could be better calculated to inspire a contempt of effeminacy and to extinguish the apprehension of pain, than that of Lycurgus. On the annual celebration of a festival which he instituted in honour of Diana all the Spartan boys were whipped till the blood ran down on the altar. This flagellation was performed under the eye of the magi-

trates of the city, and of the fathers and mothers, who exhorted their children to suffer the discipline inflicted without discovering any uneasy sensation.*

The Spartan education and discipline could scarcely ever be said to cease. After twelve years of age, the boys, whose mode of life had already been extremely austere, were permitted to wear only one garment in winter as well as in summer. They were prohibited from sleeping on any other beds but such as were made of reeds, and compelled to go barefooted at all seasons without any regard to the weather. As they approached manhood, their discipline increased in severity: their stated exercises scarcely left them a vacant hour in the day; nor was there any remission of their toils but when they were called out into military service. Then, indeed, so many indulgences were granted that the camp was considered as a scene of ease and luxury, an admirable device of the Spartan legislator to render war an object of desire rather than of apprehension to his citizens. The laws of Lycurgus also forbade them to fortify their city, lest a sense of security should diminish their vigilance.† He also enjoined them not to undertake any naval war, which, by abolishing the use of the

* Plutarch Vita Lycurgi. Pausanias lib. 3.

† Plutarch Vita Lycurgi. Xenophon Repub. Lacon.

precious metals, he had rendered them ill-qualified to support. He made it disgraceful to fly before an enemy however superior in force: so that in battle, death or victory was the lot of every Lacedæmonian, or a fate worse than death, perpetual infamy and exclusion from all offices and employments civil and military.*

By this severe system of legislation, Lycurgus succeeded in forming a community of soldiers and patriots at the expense of all domestic and social enjoyments. The stability of their state was founded on the misery of the individuals who composed it; and Alcibiades, the Athenian, used to say, "It is no wonder that the Lacedæmonians should advance fearless to battle; for considering the hardships which they suffer under their rigid institutions at home, they may choose a glorious death in the field in exchange for such a life."† The influence of these institutions in forming the national character was visible. The Lacedæmonians were a nation of statesmen and soldiers, a people, during many centuries, un-

* The Spartan king Leonidas acted on this principle at the strait of Thermopylæ. He sent away his auxiliaries; but declared it to be the duty of him and his Lacedæmonians to die rather than retire before the enemy. The Lacedæmonians, however, were sometimes defeated and forced to fly, viz. before the Messenians under Aristomenes. Pausan. lib. 4. the Thebans under Epaminondas, &c.

† Elian, Var. Hist. lib. 13. chap. 28

equalled in courage, military discipline, and the science of war; but at the same time insolent, ambitious, illiberal and cruel, destitute of refinement, and making a very slow progress in civilization. Lacedæmon displayed none of those master-pieces of architecture, painting, and sculpture, which adorned Athens and the other cities of Greece. The axe and the saw were for a long time the only tools that were used in the timber work of the houses, and their furniture was proportionably rude. The elegant arts were held in little esteem, and therefore neglected. Gymnastic exercises were the chief and almost the sole amusements of the citizens; and the maxims of policy and war, which formed almost the whole circle of their literature, were among the Spartans the only objects of a liberal education.*

In the time of Lycurgus, the Lacedæmonians were only emerging from barbarism, and his austere institutions had a strong tendency to check their further progress in civilization. From this cause it proceeded that they never became either a literary or a scientific people. None of those celebrated philosophers, poets, and orators, whose names have rendered Greece illustrious, are found among the Lacedæmonians. Their oratory, the only branch of

* Plutarch Vita Lycurgi. Xenophon Repub. Lacon.

literature which they could be said to cultivate was remarked for its pointed application and sententious brevity ; but it displayed none of that dazzling eloquence which shone forth at Athens and afterwards at Rome. Without entering into further particulars, it may suffice to remark that, although Lacedæmon was little more than a hundred miles distant from Athens, and nearly under the same degree of latitude, the national character of the Lacedæmonians was as different from that of the Athenians as if they had formed each other's antipodes, a circumstance which shews the omnipotence of government and laws in forming the minds and the manners of men.

Although the design of Lycurgus was evidently to render the Spartans a martial people, the institutions of that stern legislator were not calculated to make them a great or flourishing nation. By prohibiting the use of the precious metals, he prevented the introduction of luxury ; but that regulation entailed perpetual poverty on the state, and rendered commerce impossible. During the contests between Greece and Persia, the Lacedæmonians were obliged to set aside the laws of Lycurgus relating to naval war, and undertook several expeditions against Egypt and Asia ; but while his institutions remained in full force, they could neither acquire wealth

by commerce, nor extend their dominions by arms.

The other Greek republics had a near resemblance to Athens in their political constitution. In every one of them the whole government was vested in the senate and the assembly of the people, the former to debate and the latter to decide. But these states possessed only a small extent of territory; and being unable to defend themselves against the ambition of Sparta and Athens, they were generally drawn into the vortex of those two potent republics, and implicated in their contests and revolutions. Athens might be considered as the metropolis of Greece, the centre and principal seat of her literature, her science, her arts and refinement.

Rome was at first a monarchy and afterwards a republic. But the Roman kings were never despotic: the senate, composed of a hundred members,* designated by the name of "Censum Patres," was established by Romulus: the rights of the people were also defined; and in the Roman monarchy may be traced several of the principles of the future republic. After the revolution which hurled Tarquin from his throne, the political system was new modelled, and a republican government established less

* In the reign of Tarquinius Priscus, the Roman senate was increased 300 members.

favourable to democratic licentiousness than that of Athens, but less restrictive to personal liberty, and less hostile to domestic happiness than that of Sparta. The political constitution of Rome contained a greater portion of aristocracy than any of the Grecian republics. The patrician families were distinguished from the plebeians by peculiar and important privileges. The people had the right of electing their governors ; but the patricians alone were eligible to the highest offices of the state. These invidious distinctions and exclusive rights excited endless disputes between the patrician and plebeian parties ; but the latter continually gained ground ; and at length the government approached near to a democracy. The Roman republic, however, through all its changes and revolutions, preserved these essential features of the Grecian governments : the senate deliberated and proposed ; but the ultimate decision on all public measures belonged to the people.

The history of the Romans is well known. After subduing the petty states of Italy, Rome became mistress of the world. Her destiny in this respect was widely different from those of Sparta and Athens, neither of which famous republics ever extended their dominions beyond the narrow limits of Greece and the islands and shores of the Egean sea. It has

een already observed that the narrow policy of Lycurgus in prohibiting the introduction of gold and silver and the practice of naval war had effectually prevented the aggrandizement of Sparta. Athens, although she produced heroes whose actions are immortalized in history: although the names of Miltiades, Themistocles, Aristides, Conon, Alcibiades, and many other celebrated commanders, embellish her annals and shed lustre on her memory, was less actuated by the spirit of conquest than the Roman republic appears to have been from the first ages of its existence. An ambitious aim at universal empire appears to have been instilled into the Romans at an early period; and the pretended vision of Julius Proculus, may, perhaps, have contributed to excite in them the expectation of ruling over the world, and which at that time was very distant and improbable. Romulus, the founder and first king of Rome, having disappeared during a violent thunder storm, assassinated, no doubt, by conspirators, it was deemed necessary, in order to calm the minds of the people, to decree his apotheosis, and pretend that he was taken up to heaven and placed among the gods. The story easily obtained credit among the semi-barbarian inhabitants of infant Rome, and was confirmed by another tale equally extravagant. Julius Proculus, a senator, and

probably one of the persons concerned in the conspiracy, solemnly declared that Romulus suddenly descending from heaven presented himself before him, and gave him the following instructions:—"Go," said he, "announce to the Romans that it is the will of the celestial powers, that my city of Rome shall be the capital of the universe. Henceforth let them cultivate the military art; and let them know and teach their posterity that no human power shall be able to resist the Roman arms." Such a story was calculated to make a deep impression on the minds of a superstitious and credulous multitude, who had been accustomed to admire the exploits of their martial king, and were now made to believe that he was enrolled among the gods, and from his celestial habitation superintended their affairs. To complete the delusion, a temple was built to Romulus on the Quirinal hill: solemn rites were established to his honour: and from that time he was considered as one of the gods of Rome.

After expelling their king Tarquinius Superbus, and abolishing monarchical government, the Romans instituted annual consuls, who

* Abi, inquit, nuncia Romanis, cœlestes ita velle ut mea Roma caput orbis terrarum sit: proinde rem militarem colant, sciantque ita posteris tradant, nullas opes humanas armis Romanis resistere possent. Livii lib. 1. chap 16.

ring the time of holding their office, were commanders in chief of the armies, and vested with almost regal power. This measure greatly contributed to the establishment of that belligerent system to which the republic invariably adhered during the whole period of its existence. In the lives of monarchs there are, as Montesquieu observes, certain moments in which their conduct may be actuated by ambition; but other passions succeed; and sometimes princes sink into indolence.* Of these changes history affords innumerable instances; and indeed it is scarcely consistent with the order of nature that a long reign should display, in every period of its duration, the same variable spirit of enterprising activity. But the consuls of Rome being changed every year, the grand object of these temporary sovereigns was to signalize the short term of their administration by some splendid achievement; and therefore not a moment was lost to the views and pursuits of ambition. They engaged the senate to propose new wars to the people and constantly pointed out new enemies. This belligerent system was not more agreeable to the views of the consuls than to those of the senate. That body being constantly harassed by the complaints and demands of the

people, found it, if not absolutely necessary, least highly expedient to have the citizens constantly engaged in foreign wars, in order to divert their attention from domestic grievances. War was also rendered agreeable to the people by the equal distribution of the spoils to the soldiers.* Those citizens who were not called out to actual service also enjoyed the fruits of victory. The conquered lands were divided into two parts, of which one was sold for the benefit of the public treasury, the other was distributed among the citizens under a real charge to the republic.† Rome being for a long time without commerce and almost without arts and manufactures, her citizens could acquire no wealth but by pillage. The consuls, not being entitled to the honours of triumph until they had made a conquest, gained a victory, carried on their wars with extraordinary activity and irresistible impetuosity. Rome was, therefore, by the principles of her government, in a state of violence and perpetual war, until she had subdued those parts of the world that were thought worth the trouble of a conquest.‡

* Polyb. lib. 10. chap. 16.

† Montesquiou Grand. et Decad. des Rom. chap. 1. p. 7.

‡ The system of policy and warfare by which the Romans erected their colossal fabric of universal empire, is ably sketched by Montesquiou Grand. et Decad. des Rom. chap. 5 and 6.

The effects of such a political system and of such principles of government were visibly displayed in the national character. The Romans, during the early ages of the republic, delighted in war, and excelled most other nations in patriotism. They despised every idea of refinement as tending to effeminacy, and cultivated no arts but such as were of evident utility. As agriculture was useful and even necessary to the state as well as to individuals, it was considered by them as honourable; and a Roman senator or consul did not think it beneath his dignity to put his hand to the plough. But the sciences that were held in the highest esteem, were those which could be rendered subservient to the purposes of war and government. The study of eloquence and tactics constituted the whole of a liberal education; and in these some degree of proficiency was indispensable to every citizen who aspired to the consulate or to the other offices of the republic.

It is highly necessary that the rulers of states and communities should acquire the art of making strong impressions on the minds of the people: by these means the imagination is roused and kept in action. The statesman who can at all times direct public opinion, may boast of having found the point which Archimedes required to enable him to move

the earth. No politicians were ever more sensible of this than the rulers of Rome ; and none were ever more successful in forming the public mind. The Roman character had perhaps less of individuality than that of any other people, unless we may except the Lacedæmonians : it was an uniform model to which all their eminent men adapted their particular dispositions ; and their moral writers always presented the same examples.* The magnificent sounds of “ eternal Rome,” and “ the majesty of the Roman people,” which the orators constantly rung in the ears of the citizens, acted as a magic spell on their minds, and inspired them with lofty ideas. An insatiable thirst of military glory, an extravagant confidence in their own force, an insolent contempt of their enemies, and an unbounded ambition of extending their empire, formed the distinguishing traits of the Roman character.

The changes which took place in the government of these celebrated republics, and the events that occur in their history, produce corresponding revolutions in the character as well as the circumstances of their citizens. The age of Themistocles, Conon, &c. was the æra of the greatest external power and grandeur of Athens : the age of Pericles was that of

* *Mad. de Stael de la Literat. tom. 1. p. 146:*

er highest internal splendour. During the first years of his administration, Athens pretended to and even possessed the command of Greece. She held the lesser states, which she called her allies, in a state of complete subordination, and lavished their subsidies, bestowed on the national defence, in magnificent buildings, games, and festivals. The allied or rather tributary states complained; but Lacedæmon was the only power that dared to resist the domineering republic of Athens; and the Peloponesan war was the consequence. This contest, so fatal to the independence of Greece, terminated in the capture of Athens by Lysander, and the complete humiliation of that famous republic. The Athenians submitted so far as to demolish their port, to limit their fleet to twelve ships, and to engage to undertake no military enterprise without the sanction of the Lacedæmonians. That lofty and patriotic enthusiasm which had been so remarkable amongst the Greeks, was now greatly weakened and almost extinct. Their divisions proved fatal to their national independence. Athens became the ally of Persia: the influence of Persian gold excited a general confederacy of the Grecian states against the Lacedæmonians, and rendered the power of Artaxerxes the Great almost as uncontrollable in Greece as in his own dominions. After the conquest of

their city by Lysander, and their political humiliation, the Athenians seemed to have lost their enterprising spirit. The pleasures of luxury, introduced by Persian gold, supplanted the ardour of heroism. Poets, musicians, sculptors, and comedians were now almost the only great men of Attica. The Athenian orators and popular leaders were for the most part pensioners of Persia; and that sublime patriotism which had formerly shone so bright in the Grecian character, had now given way to considerations of private interest. Corruption reigned in all the Grecian states, and they continued to weaken one another by their divisions, till Philip, king of Macedonia, a country which before his reign had been little known or noticed, but by the active and crafty genius of that prince had become important and powerful, put an end to their independence. When their public virtue was lost, their popular governments only served to favour the licentiousness of the multitude and the corruption of their demagogues. The principal orators in most of their states were bribed into the service of Philip; and all the eloquence of Demosthenes, aided by his incorruptible patriotism, was unequal to the mean but more seductive arts of his opponents, who by flattering the people gained their affections. The victory of Chæronea rendered Philip

the master of Greece ; but this conquest did not depend on the issue of a battle. That politic prince had so deeply laid his scheme, and by bribery and intrigues had gained such a number of considerable persons in the different states that, according to his own expression, without the victory of Cæronea the course of another day would have put him in possession of the sovereignty of Greece.

Thus terminated the liberty and independence of the Greeks, whose brilliant achievements and intellectual attainments form one of the most splendid pictures that history exhibits. Under Alexander the Great and his successors they were sometimes in a state approaching to slavery, and sometimes enjoyed a temporary liberty. At length they called in the Romans to assist them against the Macedonians ; but finding that in these allies they had only given themselves new masters, they endeavoured to correct their imprudence by a folly of still greater magnitude. They called in Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, to assist them in expelling the Romans. The aid which they received from Antiochus was feeble and ineffectual, and only afforded to the Romans a specious pretext for their subjugation. Athens, Sparta, and all the celebrated states of Greece sunk into the indiscriminate mass of nations that acknowledged the sovereignty of Rome,

and never more enjoyed an independent existence.

Athens and some of the other Grecian cities, although they no longer figured in arms, were still conspicuous and celebrated as schools of literature and science ; and the Greeks had the glory of instructing their conquerors in philosophy and the arts of refinement. But in process of time they lost this honourable distinction, and sunk into a state of intellectual as well as political degradation. Confounded with the Romans, or rather with the assemblage of nations assuming that name, they constituted a part of that corrupt and degenerate empire, to which historians have given the various appellations of Greek, Eastern, and Byzantine, but which continued to stile itself Roman, till the capture of Constantinople by the Turks put a period to its existence, and reduced the people to the most degrading state of subjection.

In this sketch, the mental eye casts a rapid glance over more than eighteen centuries in which the Grecian character is seen in a state of constant and for the most part increasing degeneracy, owing to political revolutions and the changes in government. While the Greeks possessed liberty and independence, their courage and genius were the subjects of universal admiration ; and even so long as the

retained the shadow of freedom, they commanded, by their arts and their literature, the respect and esteem of mankind. But under the disorderly despotism of the court of Constantinople, they were constantly declining towards a state of moral degradation and mental imbecillity. We cannot read the history of the Byzantine empire, compiled by its native writers, nor contemplate its picture, as drawn by the genius and judgment of Montesquieu, without beholding a government weak, unstable, and tyrannical, a people bigotted and immoral, the slaves of a puerile imagination.*

This degeneracy of the Greeks can be ascribed only to moral causes, as their physical circumstances remained without any alteration. It may, says an eminent writer, be true that the Greeks are not physically degenerated, and that Constantinople contained, on the day when it changed masters, as many men of six feet and upwards as in the hour of its prosperity; but ancient history and modern politics instruct us, that something more than physical perfection is necessary to preserve a state in vigour and independence; and the Greeks in particular are a melancholy example of the near connexion between moral

* For a lively description of the disorders and weakness of the eastern empire, see Montesquieu *Grandeur and Decadence des Romains*, p. 21—22.

degradation and national decay.”* From the whole history of the Greeks, during the long period of their decline, it evidently appears that the vices and tyranny of the government destroyed the virtues and depressed the genius of the people, whose degeneracy, by a kind of re-action, caused the downfall of the empire.

The political degradation in which the Greeks have, during more than three centuries and a half, been held by the Turks, has completed the moral and intellectual degeneracy of their character; and the glories of their ancestors only serve to render their vices more prominent. Had we not been early taught to admire Grecian courage, wisdom, and talents, we might look upon the meanness of the present race with less emotion. But who can think without regret that the descendants of the conquerors of Marathon are cowards and slaves? “The Greeks of the present day,” says a modern traveller, “present, in their moral character, the same spectacle as that of a man whom heaven has granted the doubtful blessing of a very long life. The name, the glory

* Lord Byron's *Childe Harold*—Notes on the Greeks No. 3. His reasoning is just; and his lordship has not deemed it necessary to enter into calculations. But to speak accurately, Constantinople, when taken by Mahomed II. cannot be supposed to have contained so many men of six feet high as it did before its capture by the Latins, in 1204, as in all probability the city scarcely contained half the number of inhabitants.

former days, and numerous other circumstances are unchanged; but when compared with the past, it is indeed a second childhood, a mere oblivion.’’*

But however debased in a moral point of view, the Greeks still retain much of what we may suppose to have been their former physical character. Few among them are deformed or ugly: on the contrary those of the Morea and the western isles of the Archipelago are in general of a remarkably athletic frame, with broad shoulders and strong necks, while those of Constantinople, the coasts of Asia Minor, and the other islands, compensate by the elegance of their form what seems to be deficient in its strength. Their countenances are expressive; but slavery is strongly marked in every feature.

It appears, however, that notwithstanding their present degradation, a favourable change of circumstances might restore to the Greeks their original character. They are even at this day the pirates of the Levant and the best seamen and marines in the Ottoman service. Even Turkish oppression cannot entirely destroy the natural cheerfulness of their disposition. In the taverns, where they frequently drink to the greatest excess, they are generally

* Semple's Trav. vol. 2, chap. 9.

seen dancing to music, of which they are exceedingly fond.* Their vices perhaps have been exaggerated: but how great soever they may be, they are such as always originate from slavery. "Their life," says Lord Byron, "is a perpetual struggle against truth: they are vicious in their own defence. They are so unused to kindness, that when they occasionally meet with it, they look upon it with suspicion, as a dog often beaten snaps at your fingers if you attempt to caress him. 'They are ungrateful notoriously ungrateful!'—this is the general cry. Now in the name of Nemesis! for what are they to be grateful? Where is the human being that ever conferred a benefit on Greek or Greeks? They are to be grateful to the Turks for their fetters, and to the Franks for their broken promises and lying counsels. They are to be grateful to the artist who engraves their ruins, and to the antiquary who carries them away; to the traveller whose janissary flogs them; and to the scribbler whose journal abuses them! This is the amount of their obligations to foreigners."† Under these circumstances it is no wonder that the modern Greeks should be ungrateful as

* M. de Guy's *Sentimental Journey through Greece*, vol. 1. p. 126. Mr. Semple acquits the Greek sailors of the charge of drunkenness, and says they are strong, active, and temperate. *Semple's Trav.* vol. 2. p. 241. Perhaps he speaks somewhat too favourably.

† Lord Byron's notes on the Greeks, No. 1. *ubi supra*.

well as false in their promises and treacherous in their conduct. These vices are every where the productions of tyranny, which extinguishes in those whom it oppresses every noble and generous sentiment and every manly virtue.

A writer, who appears to be a panegyrist of the Greeks, attributes their former progress in poetry and the fine arts, in the first place, to nature, and then to the system of government as the secondary cause. He says "That nature alone produced the poets and musicians, the painters and sculptors of ancient Greece." But after this positive assertion, that all the men of genius whose works raised that celebrated country to so high a pitch of glory and renown, owed every thing to nature, he adds, "That a lively imagination, an active spirit, fine organization, a delicate taste, or rather exquisite sensibility, assisted by a clear sky, the prospect of a most beautiful country, aided by a government the best adapted to extend, display, and aggrandize the genius of man, which, without the blessings of liberty, can never act with its true force: these are the advantages that nature so bountifully bestowed on the Greeks."* They had nothing to do but to turn towards the objects she presented, and exercise the talents she gave them:

M. de Guy's Sentimental Journey, vol. 3. p. 9. &c. M. de Guy, however, might have considered that their government was not a gift bestowed on them by nature.

the arts followed. Possessing a taste formed by the habitude of seeing and producing the most beautiful things, the empire of the arts insensibilý established itself: the ambition of the people centered in a desire to promote that empire, and to establish the glory of their country.*

“But,” says M. de Guy, “if genius is to be considered as the father of the arts, liberty certainly deserves to rank as their mother. Cherished in her bosom, they flourished: but abandoned by this softer parent, they fled from conquered, ruined Greece.” The arts have experienced the same fate in all countries. The Etruscans, who once seemed to rival the Greeks in taste and refinement, no sooner fell under the Roman power, than their genius disappeared and they sunk into barbarism. It appears, therefore, from numerous instances, and especially from the case of the Greeks, that moral causes, infinitely more than physical circumstances, influence national character: since arts, sciences, and letters now flourish on the cold and foggy shores of the Baltic sea and the German ocean, while during a period of several centuries not a single poet or philosopher has arisen in the country of Homer and Plato.

* M. de Guy ubi supra.

It is impossible to reflect on the state of those beautiful countries, formerly covered with flourishing cities, the seat of the arts, and the glory of the universe, now strewn with the ruins of temples and the mouldering monuments of so great a people, without lamenting the instability of human grandeur, nor to contemplate the venerable relics of Athens, without dropping a tear of regret on those wrecks of Grecian genius.* While the nations of Europe exhaust their strength and their wealth in long and bloody wars one against another, through what ill judged policy does it happen that the restoration of Greece does not appear to have entered into the view of any of their sovereigns, except the immortal Catherine of Russia?† Such an undertaking would naturally excite jealousies and give the alarm to different European powers; but might not

* Much unmerited and ill judged obloquy has been thrown out by M. de Laubriand and others against Lord Elgin, on account of his removing several master-pieces of statuary and sculpture from the Parthenon at Athens, and bringing them to London. His lordship has rendered an important service to his country, and to the lovers of the arts both in Great Britain and France. Many thousands of Englishmen who would never have had the opportunity of visiting Athens, may now contemplate the immortal chef d'œuvres of the Grecian artists. Many Frenchmen also visit London who will never see Athens. In their original situation, these noble remains of antiquity were among a people incapable of appreciating their worth, like "Flowers which blush unseen, and waste their sweetness on the desert air."

† That Catherine II. had formed the design, or at least the desire of confining the Ottoman power within the limits of Asia, is certain.

such measures be adopted as would remove their apprehensions and reconcile their interests? The enterprise would be glorious; its execution could not be difficult: it would be conducive to human happiness, and would immortalize the prince and the nation by whom it should be accomplished.

Rome having attained a much higher degree of power and grandeur than Athens and Sparta, maintained herself longer in her high elevation than these or any other of the Grecian states. Internal corruption proved equally fatal to the freedom of Athens and Rome; but the former as well as all Greece fell under foreign domination, the latter saw her republican government subverted, and her liberties extinguished by the ambition of a few overgrown citizens. In the latter times of the republic, the course of events had been gradually preparing this important revolution. So long as Carthage, the formidable enemy of Rome, existed, the Romans cultivated with constancy and ardour all the republican virtues; but as soon as that foreign terror was removed, the internal factions which had

But whether her plan was to annex European Turkey to Russia, or to make it an independent empire is not so well known. The annexation of so extensive and important a country to any of the great empires of Europe, would give just cause of alarm to all the other powers. But the establishment of an independent empire could not be liable to the same objections, nor calculated to excite the same apprehensions.

always agitated the city, became more active and violent. The conquest of Greece and Asia caused a prodigious influx of wealth, which brought in a deluge of luxury incompatible with the existence of a popular government. Several of the Roman citizens acquired princely fortunes, while the greater number were oppressed by poverty. Such a state of society was quite the reverse of that equality which forms the basis and the very essence of the democratical system.

While Rome was extending her dominions on every side, two hostile factions, coeval with the republic, existed within her walls. Thevidious distinction of patricians and plebeians has already been noticed; and their reiterated contests are well known to all who are conversant with Roman history. This disorganizing circumstance in the constitution was, by many writers, been considered as one of the radical causes of the dissolution of the republican government. Montesquieu, however, is of a different opinion, and considers those divisions as of a salutary nature and even necessary to the system; for, as he very justly observes, the Romans who were such haughty, audacious, and terrible warriors abroad, could scarcely be remarkable for moderation at home.*

* Montesq. *Grandeur and Decad. des Rom.* chap. 9. p. 81.

It is the decided opinion of this eminent political writer, that the too great extension of the republic, which changed the popular tumults into civil wars, was the sole cause of its dissolution. As long as the domination of Rome was confined within the boundaries of Italy, the republican government might easily subsist. Every soldier was a citizen: the number of troops was not excessive; and no person was received into the army who did not possess property sufficient to give him an interest in the conservation of the city and the support of the republic, while the senate had the near inspection of the conduct of the generals. But after the legions had passed the Alps and the sea, the soldiers being stationed for a long time in the countries which they had conquered gradually and almost imperceptibly lost the spirit and sentiments of citizens, while the military commanders who had armies and kingdoms at their disposal, grew sensible of their own strength and disdained control. The soldiers began to acknowledge no authority but that of their general. They were no longer the soldiers of the republic, but those of Sylla, of Marius, of Pompey, or of Cæsar. And Rome could no longer be certain whether

* Montesquieu *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains*, chap. 6 p. 78.

the commander of an army in one of her provinces was her protector or her enemy.

The extension of the freedom of the city contributed also in no small degree to the subversion of the republic. Rome having achieved so many conquests by the help of the people of Italy, granted to some of them the privilege of citizens. Her refusal of the same favour to others gave rise to the social war, one of the most dangerous in which she had ever engaged.* The result was, that she granted the privilege of citizenship, in the first place, to such of her allies as had distinguished themselves by their fidelity and attachment during the contest, and afterwards to all the Italians. The political aspect of Rome was now entirely changed. It was no longer that city where all the people were animated by the same spirit, by the same love of liberty, and the same hatred of tyranny. All the people of Italy having now become its citizens, each city brought thither its genius, its particular interests, and its dependance on some powerful protector. Ambitious demagogues brought to Rome the people of whole cities and provinces to attend the popular assemblies, in order to procure a majority of votes at the elections and on the discussion of public

* Appian. De Bello civ. lib. 1, chap. 39.

measures. A seditious multitude, collected from all parts of Italy, assumed the name of Comitæ; and the authority of the people, its laws, and even the Roman people itself, were now only a chimera. Such, indeed, was the anarchy introduced by this extension of the freedom of the city, and the consequent influx of voters and clients, that it could scarcely any longer be known what was or was not decreed by the people.* The city no longer formed one united and harmonizing whole. Its citizens, who were such only by a sort of fiction, having neither the same walls, the same magistrates, the same gods, the same temples, nor the same sepulchres, no longer beheld Rome with the same veneration and attachment. That exalted patriotism which had distinguished her native citizens was no longer to be found among the crowds of provincials; and Roman sentiments soon became nearly extinct.

It has been observed that the narrow policy of preserving, without any foreign mixture, the pure blood of their citizens, checked their fortune and hastened the downfall of Athens and Sparta. During the most flourishing æra of the Athenian commonwealth, the number

* Vide Ciceronis epist. : ad Atticum lib. 4. epist. 13. The influx of strangers into Rome was so great as to corrupt the purity of the Latin language. Cicero De Claris Orat. chap. 74.

† Montesquieu Grand, et Decad. des Rom. chap. 9. p. 8 —82.

of citizens gradually declined from thirty thousand to twenty-one thousand.* There seems to have been a still greater diminution of the number of free citizens at Lacedæmon from the time of Lycurgus to that of Agis and Cleomenes.† Circumstances like these did not seem to promise a long duration to Athens and Sparta. In fact, these two famous republics consisted each of a handful of freemen amidst a nation of strangers and slaves. In regard to the privilege of citizenship the conduct of the Romans was widely different. Their aspiring genius sacrificed private vanity to public ambition ; and they deemed it prudent as well as honourable to adopt as compatriots the enemies whom they had conquered. In the infancy of Rome this liberal policy was of great advantage to her interests : it was adopted by Romulus, her founder, and continued under the regal and afterwards under the republican government. Notwithstanding the incessant demands of war and colonies, the citizens, who in the first census of Servius Tullius amounted to no more than eighty-three thousand, were, before the commencement of the social war, multiplied to the number of four hundred and sixty-three thousand

* Herodot. lib. 5. chap. 97. Athenceus lib. 6. p. 172.

† Plutarch Vita Lycurgi, Vita Agis, Vita Cleom.

men capable of bearing arms.* But there are certain limits where every political measure ought to stop. The liberal communication of the freedom of the city, which in the early ages of Rome was so conducive to her aggrandizement, when extended to all the people of Italy, plunged her into anarchy, and extinguished that enthusiastic spirit of patriotism which had been the source of her great achievements, and the cause of her high exaltation. If, therefore, the narrow policy of Athens and Sparta, in regard to the right of citizenship, contributed to prevent their aggrandizement, an opposite conduct was equally detrimental to Rome, a circumstance which shews the danger of extremes in political measures, especially in a republic.

The exorbitant aggrandizement of Rome, and the too great extension of her civil privileges, may be considered as the original sources of those complicated evils which extinguished her liberties and subverted the republican government. Her vast conquests had introduced a display of luxury scarcely equalled in any age or country, and accompanied by a corresponding degree of corruption. Avarice and prodigality, these two seemingly unnatural but not unusual companions, succeeded to

* M. de Beaufort *Repub. Rom.* liv. 6, chap. 4.

that disinterestedness and frugality which had formerly distinguished the Roman character. A variety of other causes flowing from these sources appeared as the most conspicuous agents in the destruction of the republican system. The civil wars between Marius and Sulla had learned the Roman soldiers to embroil their hands in the blood of their fellow citizens. But the tyrannical and iniquitous system of proscriptions which these two rival chiefs introduced, was the source of still greater evils. It became dangerous to adhere to the cause of liberty; for when two ambitious citizens contended for the supreme power, it was necessary to follow the fortunes of one or the other, as those who remained neuter were most certain of being proscribed by the victor. The Roman affairs were now in such a state that the republican government could not long exist, and it is absurd to accuse the ambition of particular persons as the cause of its fall. That revolution must rather be ascribed to a combination of causes which had long been operating; for as Rome was then circumstanced, if Cæsar and Pompey had adopted the conduct of Cato, others would have acted the part of Cæsar and Pompey; and the republic would have been overturned by some other hands.

Notwithstanding the unparalleled luxury which existed in Rome, and the disorders that

convulsed the republic, the Romans had not lost all the great qualities by which they had so long being distinguished. One of the fundamental laws of the state, established by Romulus, and confirmed by the republican government, permitted to the free citizens the exercise of only two sorts of employment, agriculture and war. This law appears to have greatly contributed to form the genius and particular turn of mind of the Romans. They despised commerce and the arts as the occupations of slaves, and regarded the exercise of them as disgraceful to freemen. If there were any exceptions to this general mode of thinking, they were found among the affranchised slaves, who preserved their former habits of industry. But the generality of the Roman citizens knew only the arts of war and eloquence, which alone opened the way to the offices and honours of the republic. The force of these institutions with the habits of life, to which they had given rise, had made such impressions on the minds of the Romans that in the midst of riches and luxury they were still distinguished by the most heroic valour and the most assiduous application to the study and practice of war,* a circumstance

* Montesquieu says he believes that this has never happened to any other nation. *Grandeur et Decadence des Rom.* chap. 10. p. 8. But Montesquieu might have remembered that, although the luxury of both England and France has for some time been at a very high pitch

which maintained the national independence and even the grandeur of Rome for some centuries after the loss of her constitutional freedom.

From the slight sketch that has here been given of the most famous republics of antiquity, we cannot but see that the constitution of Sparta was a monstrous and singular species of tyranny, in direct and constant hostility with every principle of human happiness. But it was admirably calculated to mould the minds and the manners of the people to a particular standard of patriotism, by extinguishing every idea of private consideration and every sentiment of domestic affection. The necessary effects of so restrictive a system was such as might be supposed: a Spartan was a being not only different from all the other Greeks, but also from the men of all other nations. Brave and politic, but austere, cruel, and inflexible, he seemed to have divested himself of the common feelings of human nature: the commonwealth was the grand object that was ever in his eye: nothing of an individual nature was deemed worthy of his attention.

Athens, free from the austere restrictions of Sparta, but not less ambitious of glory, im-

yet neither the English nor French have in the least degenerated from their martial character.

impressed on her citizens a totally different character. Her free constitution, which soon became a licentious and turbulent democracy, gave an ample scope to individual inclination, exertion and taste. The excess of freedom, although it gave rise to an infinity of evils, was also productive of incalculable good. The Athenians being left to their own inclinations, sought honour and applause by all the various means that could present themselves to a great number of aspiring and ingenious minds. Letters and arts were cultivated as well as the science of arms; and Athens became the instructress of mankind as well as the admiration of the universe.

Rome, during the purer ages of the republic, exhibited, in regard to her institutions, a medium between Athens and Sparta. Her political system, founded on principles less loose and disorganizing than those of the former, but far more liberal than those of the latter government, gave a corresponding tint to the character of her citizens. Until the end of the punic wars, the Romans displayed more of the Lacedæmonian than of the Athenian character. But after the destruction of Carthage and the conquest of Greece, Asia Minor and Syria, the Roman character losing every tincture of Spartan austerity, began to take more of the Athenian colouring.

An elegant writer asserts, that "One predominant virtue sustains all political associations, independently of the principle of government, that amongst all the different qualities one is preferred, without which all the rest are as nothing, and which alone suffices to excuse the absence of them all. This quality is the patriotic tie, the distinctive character of the citizens of one common country. Among the Lacedæmonians, it was the contempt of physical pain: among the Athenians, the distinction of talents: among the Romans, the power of the mind over its passions and affections."* These national characteristics, however, are far from being independent of the principle of government, that, indeed, being the source from which they generally originate. But distinctive characters are chiefly formed by republican governments, where every citizen considers himself as an important member of the state, and therefore conforms his views, his habits, his ideas, and tastes to its peculiar institutions and even to its established prejudices.

The republican system, although well adapted to a small community, is almost inevitably productive of anarchy in a state of large territorial extent and comprising a numerous popu-

* Mad, de Stael de la *Litterature*, &c. tom. 1. p. 145.

lation. A democratical government like that of Athens, and, indeed, any government which like the famous republics of antiquity, refer all the ultimate decisions to a popular assembly instead of a body of representatives, is irrational in theory and pernicious in practice. It gives to ignorance the superiority over knowledge: to uncultivated intellect, the direction of intelligence: and to folly, the governance of reason and sagacity. Intelligence, information, learning, and wisdom ought to govern nations; and these will always be found to reside chiefly amongst the middle and superior classes, whose habits of thinking are more correct than those of the vulgar.

The republican system, however, is extremely favourable to the developement of talents and genius. In a republic like that of Athens, the market of public employment, of honour, and dignity, is open to all: it is consequently crowded with competitors; and each candidate is obliged to exert all the faculties of his mind, and to call forth all his talents and energy. Hence that activity of mind, the fermentation of intellect and imagination which produces genius and creates the poet and the orator, the statesman, the sage, and the hero. But under despotic government the administration being confined to the

monarch and his ministers, the whole body of the people is excluded from all influence in national affairs. In every free country, whether republic or monarchy, mental improvement frequently opens the way to fortune and fame, rank and consideration. It is therefore necessary to every individual who wishes to obtain or keep a place in the higher orders of society. A despotic government, on the contrary, presents no motives to intellectual exertion; and all energy of mind evaporates under its baleful influence.

This appears to have been the case with many of the oriental nations. The Hindoos, there is every reason to believe, were acquainted with the ornamental arts long before the æra of European civilization; but they have been in a retrograde state more than twenty centuries. Mr. Forster says, that "In some ruins near Kurrah, Mannickpour, and in the vicinity of Benares, there are now to be seen mutilated fragments of sculpture, which, for the simple elegance of the design as well as the exact nicety of the execution, may, in his opinion, vie with the works of European masters. The Hindoos," says he, "of this day have, however, only a slender knowledge of the rules of proportion, and none of perspective. They are just imitators and correct workmen, but they possess merely the glimmer-

ings of genius.”* Another writer, quoted by Dr. Robertson, says, that “No part of the world abounds more in marks of antiquity for arts, sciences, and civilization, than India from the Ganges to Cape Comorin : I think,” says Colonel Call, “that the carving on some of the choultries and pagodas, as well as the grandeur of the work, exceeds any thing of modern execution, not only for the delicacy of the chisel, but the expence of construction, considering in many instances to what distance the component parts were carried, and to what heights they were raised.”† But the energies of Hindoo intellect were extinguished by the blasting influence of despotism. The arts became retrograde in India, and works of genius were unknown : because the artisan being ill treated and ill paid, could find no encouragement for their industry. Under the Mogul government, an Omrah could send for an artizan and compel him to perform a piece of work on such terms as he pleased to grant. The best artists of the east were retained in the courts of the princes and great men ; but there genius pined, and was checked in the bud by the terrors of despotic power.‡ An Indian philosopher discoursing on this subject with

* Forster's Travels, vol. 1. p. 80.

† Robertson's Ind. p. 352.

‡ Volney's Travels in Syria, &c. vol. p. 435.

an European traveller, said, "How can you expect to find among us, men of genius and talents? The arts and sciences have always been oppressed by ignorant princes, eager to accumulate riches, and corrupted by the effeminacy of a seraglio."* Mr. Scott Waring also observes, that "Among the modern Persians, to be ingenious and able is an actual misfortune, as the artists are compelled to work for the principal people without the smallest hope of being recompensed for their labours, or repaid for the expences which they may have incurred."†

The moral and intellectual degradation of the Hindoos and other orientals, arises, like that of the Greeks, from subjection to foreign conquerors and to despotic government, and not from physical causes. If the nations of India are not addicted to curious investigations, and are generally inattentive to the history of their own country; if their pleasures are often indolent and languid, and their chief happiness seems to be centered in the enjoyment of the present hour, which absorbs every retrospect of the past and every care for the future, we may allow much to the mild influence of their climate, and the easy produce of a fertile soil;

* Sonnerat. Voyage aux Indes, tom. 2. p. 99.

† Scott Waring's Tour to Shiraz, p. 32-48.

but the root of this indifference and lassitude is fixed in the miseries which for ages past have overwhelmed their country, and robbed them of their social securities.*

In proportion as despotism in government tends to check every kind of mental exertion it promotes a spirit of indolence and a desire of sensual enjoyments. "Where government," says Helvetius, "forbids to think, men give themselves up to idleness. An inhabitude to reflection renders application painful, and attention fatiguing. It is then only in agreeable sensations that men can seek for happiness.—He that does not think, would feel, and feed deliciously. Men would grow in sensations as they diminish in thoughts. But as they cannot be constantly affected by voluptuous sensations, the interval that separates these sensations is filled up with disgust."† Such, indeed, must be the case under the Asiatic despotism where the subjects, whatever talents or wealth they may have received from nature or fortune are wholly excluded from the management of national affairs, and even prohibited to converse on political subjects. Men cannot be active if their social institutions render indolence a sort of necessity.‡ Activity can be

* Chatfield's Hindostan, p. 232.

† Helvetius Treat. on Man, vol. 2. p. 73.

‡ Volney's Trav. Syria, vol. 2, p. 473—476.

roused only by objects of desire, and maintained by the hope of arriving at enjoyment. If these two essentials are wanting, there is an end to all individual and national energy; and such is in general the condition of the orientals.

A theory may be generally true and yet fail in some particular cases. Despotism is in its nature destructive of mental energy; but, even in this respect, much depends on the abilities and disposition of the monarch. The literature of the Romans suffered no detriment by the destruction of freedom: it only took a different turn, and assumed a new character under the government of Augustus. While liberty was the animating principle of republican Rome, the study of rhetoric was an efficient instrument in the hands of ambition, and consequently commanded more than all other literary pursuits, the attention of those whose talents entitled them to aspire to the offices and dignities of the state. But after the establishment of an absolute monarchy, these high prizes were taken out of the lottery of life, and the primitive use of intellectual accomplishments no longer existed. But talents and ambition being excluded from the career of political activity, sought for distinction and glory by the cultivation of poetry as well as of philosophy and history. Augustus was a prince of a refined understanding, and while

he exercised an uncontrolled authority, under republican forms, with a mildness that scarcely excited in the people any sensation of despotism, he distinguished himself as the patron of letters. His example was followed by Mœcenas and other illustrious personages. The imperial court became the rendezvous of the Roman literati; and the reign of Augustus obtained a lasting celebrity by developing the genius and patronizing the labours of Livy and Virgil.

The Arabian caliphate was a despotic monarchy: but the government of the successors of Mahomed was in general rational and mild. After their arms had carried slaughter and devastation over extensive countries, and their conquests formed one of the most powerful empires mentioned in history, the caliphs began to turn their attention to the encouragement of science and letters. The genius of their subjects was awakened by the prospect of splendid rewards. Schools were opened at Bagdad, Cusa, Bassora, and many other places, and the arts and sciences were encouraged with a munificence which reflected the highest honour on their patrons; nor was the laudable attempt to revive the arts confined to the precincts of the court of Bagdad: it was communicated to the Arabians in Syria, Africa, and Spain; and they may justly claim the honour

of restoring letters and science both in Europe and Asia.*

France, before the late revolution, was an absolute monarchy; but arbitrary power was exercised in that kingdom with mildness, by a succession of humane and polished princes, who honoured learning and learned men with their esteem and encouragement. Arts, sciences, and letters were liberally patronized by the monarchs of France, and still more by their ministers. Descartes, Corneille, &c. rendered the reign of Louis XIII. illustrious. Racine, Bayle, and many others, were the ornaments of that of Louis XIV. Voltaire, Montesquieu, Fenelon, Fontenelle, D'Alembert, and a crowd of distinguished writers adorned the age of Louis XV. In these successive reigns, letters, arts, and sciences were protected and patronised by Richlieu, Colbert, and the regent Duke of Orleans, and more recently by the Duc de Choiseul.

Several other examples might be adduced both from ancient and modern history, of the advancement of literature and science under

To the Arabians we are indebted for the cyphers or characters used in arithmetic, and which so greatly facilitate its operations. The Arabians are said to have borrowed them from India; and they were introduced into Europe by Gerbert, a monk, who had travelled in Spain, and who was raised to the papacy about the end of the tenth century, by the name of Sylvester II. Hen. Ab. Chron. An. 991.

despotic princes. The Ptolomies, of Egypt, made Alexandria the seat of learning. Their protection and patronage of the Roman pontiffs and other Italian princes, roused the genius of their subjects, and raised their talents to such a pitch, that in architecture, paintings, and sculpture, modern Italy soon began to rival the glories of ancient Greece. And in the early part of the last century, Peter the Great, one of the most arbitrary monarchs that ever reigned in Europe, introduced the arts and sciences into Russia, and immortalized his name by promoting the civilization of his vast empire.

But notwithstanding all the encouragement and support that despots can give, some branches of literature require the fostering hand of freedom to make them flourish, and without its genial influence must wither and die. The perfection of rhetoric is incompatible with subjection to an absolute monarch. The Roman senate subsisted until the subversion of the empire took place; but under the emperors it was no longer an assembly of independent legislators; and no instances of the commanding eloquence which shone with such peculiar lustre in the orations of Cicero, were produced even under the emperors of the Julian family and the Antonines. Some of these, particularly Trajan, Adrian, Antonine

Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, encouraged learning both by patronage and example; yet the rhetorical genius of Rome sunk into the gulph of oblivion. Eloquence never revived; and the purity of the latin language declined from the standard of the Augustan age. The fact is well known and the reason is obvious. Despotism excludes freedom of discussion, and leaves no safe or worthy end to be gained by fixing the principles and influencing the conduct of men. A free country is, therefore, the only soil congenial to eloquence: that noble science flourished at Athens while Athens was free, but vanished with the extinction of her liberties. At Rome it underwent the same fate. It has long been conspicuous in the British senate, being protected and fostered by a free constitution, while under the despotisms of Asia, its exercise and principles are equally unknown.

But although absolute princes have always been unfriendly to eloquence, which requires freedom of thought and sentiment, they have generally been munificent patrons of architects, statuaries, and painters, and great encouragers of all the arts that contribute to magnificence. The courts of such princes are also favourable to polished manners, as the delicate disguises of the passions there become necessary. The Corinthians made their first

advances in elegance and refinement under their famous tyrant Periander. Athens displayed her greatest splendour under the domination of Pericles. Rome acquired her highest polish under Augustus ; and the most magnificent structures that adorned the mistress of the world, were erected by the emperors. Despotism is favourable to those arts that are conducive to its splendour without being hostile to its authority.

Extent of territory is one of these circumstances that have a decided influence in determining the forms of political systems. Monarchical government is a natural and almost a constant effect of the union of extensive countries in one community. In a democratical republic, where the citizens exercise the powers of sovereignty, these powers will first be abused, and then lost, if they be committed to an unwieldy multitude. In extensive communities, each member feels his personal influence in the national system much less than the individuals of a small society. Each is, therefore, less solicitous about the concerns of the public, and more attentive to his own private interest. For that reason he more easily resigns those republican rights which he cannot exercise without considerable inconvenience, and devolves on a monarch the labour and care of governing the community.

Every Roman, in the early period of the republic, esteemed his political importance above all the wealth of the world, and all the enjoyments of life; but when Rome had acquired a vast extent of dominion, and began to indulge in luxury, individual ambition and avarice took place of public virtue. The name of a Roman citizen, at first a title of the highest dignity, being extended to all the people of Italy, became of less value, and the decay of public spirit, amidst jarring factions and the clashing of private interests, converted the republic into a military monarchy. Such in our days has been the destiny of France; and, indeed, no extensive and numerous community has ever been able to maintain, for any great length of time, a republican government. This may be regarded as a general position. The United States of America are of too recent date to be adduced as an exception: we must wait to see the increase of population, the accumulation of wealth, and the influence of luxury, before we can calculate the effects which these powerful agents, joined to the efforts of individual ambition and other unforeseen causes, may produce beyond the Atlantic.

Monarchical government and extensive dominion may be classed among the political circumstances which the experience of the

ancient and modern world shews to be the most favourable to public tranquillity. The history of human affairs affords scarcely an instance either of a powerful republic or of a country divided into a number of petty states that was not a theatre of contention and almost incessant hostilities. Such was the primeval state of Greece.* Such was that of Italy until Roman power swallowed up all the smaller states into which that country was divided. England, while under the heptarchy, exhibited a similar spectacle: such, in fine, was the condition of all the countries thus circumstanced of which history has preserved any memorial.

The same observation is applicable to every kingdom of Europe during the prevalence of the feudal system. The different districts, in an extensive country, although nominally united in one monarchy, were yet in so disconnected a state, as to occasion almost the same confusion as would have arisen from many independent governments. Before Wales and Scotland were united to England, the fertile provinces adjoining to the Severn and the Tweed, now the abode of peace, plenty, and domestic felicity, continually presented scenes of danger, inquietude, carnage, and devastation. Even the polished republics and prin-

* Plutarch Vita Thesei.

polities of Italy, in the middle ages, were constantly harassed by their contests or their internal commotions. The republic of Florence swallowed up that of Pisa: Venice and Genoa were first jealous rivals, and afterwards implacable enemies. Mantua and Milan, after being rent by successive factions, lost their republican liberty: the former fell under the dominion of the family of Gonzaga, the latter under that of the Galeazo, and afterwards of the Viconti, while Padua, after seeing her government usurped by the Carrara family, became at length an appendage to Venice. The tranquil state of Italy, for near half a century previous to the French revolution, was owing to the awe in which the different princes of that country were held by their powerful neighbours, France, Spain, and Austria.

The annals of all the Italian states are little more than the records of their contentions; and to enumerate all the cases of a similar nature would be to write the early history of every known country. Extent of territory must be considered as a circumstance which, of all others, has perhaps the greatest tendency to tranquillize the world. The contests of petty states being carried on almost at the very doors of the citizens, mutual injuries often become a source of unextinguishable hatred and of personal enmity. But in wars between

great kingdoms or empires, the theatre of military operations is generally near the borders; and the extensive interior of each country experiences only in a slight degree the effects of hostility.

It may here be objected, that too great an extent of dominion has proved fatal to some of the most celebrated empires. This circumstance, however, was not so much owing to extent as to want of consolidation. "Extensive conquests," says an eminent senator, "scarcely ever produce any real advantage to the conquerors, especially when the solid security of a very great and profitable although limited possession is changed for the precarious tenure of an unbounded dominion, which does not pay you while you hold it; nor does the advantage to be derived from such distant and hazardous enterprizes tend to any thing else than to weaken the substantial resources of the state, and excite the exertion of a force which costs more in one year than the success of it will repay in many."* But it is to be observed that these arguments are applied only to remote possessions, separated from the parent state by almost one third of the circuit of the globe, and to attempts at conquest of which the success is hazardous and the advantage

* Mr. Francis' speech on the Mahratta war, 1805.

adequate to the expence. It is only the union of a considerable extent of contiguous territory that can greatly contribute to the tranquillity of the world.

The noblest characteristic of a popular government is, that it favours mental exertion ; but it almost unavoidably produces licentiousness, turbulence, and disorder. Despotism checks the efforts of genius and industry ; but when exercised with justice and mildness, it tends to the preservation of tranquillity, and is not inconsistent with a very considerable degree of public happiness. When the administration is in the hands of a tyrannical prince, it is frequently the cause of dreadful rebellions and bloody revolutions. The Asiatic despot, enveloped in solitary splendour, scarcely considers his subjects as beings of the same nature with himself, until the spirit of the people being roused by oppression, some favourable coincidence encourages them to erect the standard of revolt.

It must, however, be observed, that in the strict sense of the word, no prince can be absolute, as no superiority of natural strength or acquired skill can enable one man to keep millions in subjection. In monarchies which were accounted the most despotic, such as Turkey, Morocco, Persia, and China, the power of the sovereign is checked by religion, ancient

customs, or public opinion. The authority of the Grand Seignior, the Persian monarch, and other Mahomedan princes, are under the control of the koran, which is a civil as well as religious code, and cannot be grossly infringed by the sovereign, without exposing himself to the hazard of a general insurrection of the people. In the despotic monarchies in Europe the abuses of the supreme authority are checked by the benevolent precepts of christianity, the enlightened education of princes, the respect for public opinion, and the general principles of civilization. Where the obligations of religion are unknown or ineffectual, and public opinion is despised, the power of the monarch is circumscribed by that of the ministers and generals, to whom he is obliged to delegate a portion of his authority. In fine, the will of the most arbitrary monarch must be checked and in some degree held in order by the obvious consideration that he is only one man amidst the millions of his subjects, and that all physical strength is on the side of the people.

It would seem that monarchy, leaving a less degree of power in the hands of the citizen than they possess in a republic, and consequently not bringing them into so close a connexion with public affairs, must have a less decided influence in the formation of nation

character. And, indeed, that uniformity of sentiments, views, and ideas which existed in the republics of Athens, Lacedæmon, and Rome, especially the two latter, are seldom to be found in a monarchy. But it must be considered that the influence of both moral and physical causes are chiefly perceptible when they exist in the extreme. When they are intricately complicated, variously combined, counterbalancing and counteracting one another in an infinity of directions, as is often the case, their effects can be discovered and distinguished only by an accuracy of investigation beyond the reach of the vulgar observer. From ancient history and modern observation, it appears that in monarchies the national character takes, in a great measure, its colouring from the greater or less degree of liberty which the subjects possess. Athens and Rome, when these states were governed by kings, the citizens enjoyed a great degree of freedom, and consequently displayed many of those traits of character by which they were afterwards distinguished. Shades of difference, corresponding with the different degrees of liberty, may also at present be traced through all the monarchical governments now existing in the world, from the despotisms of Asia and Africa to the refined and excellent constitution of Great Britain.

The extensive and populous empire of China exhibits, in a luminous point of view, the effects of long continued despotism existing in the superlative degree, and strengthened by all the laws and institutions the best calculated to ensure its permanency. "If," says Mr Barrow, "the test of a good government be made to depend on the length of its continuance, unshaken and unchanged by revolutions, China may certainly be allowed to rank the first among civilized nations. But whether good or bad it has possessed the art of moulding the multitude to its own shape in a manner unprecedented in the annals of the world. Various accidents, improved by policy, seem to have led to its durability. Among these the natural barriers of the country, excluding any foreign enemy, are not to be considered as the least favourable; whilst the extreme caution of the government in admitting strangers, kept the world in ignorance, for many ages, of the most extensive, the most powerful, and the most populous empire among men. Secluded thus from all intercourse with the rest of the world, it had opportunity and leisure to mould its own subjects into the shape which it wished them to retain: and the event has sufficiently proved its knowledge in this respect."

"A number of fortunate circumstances, seldom combined in the same country, have contributed to the preservation of internal tranquillity in China. The language is of a nature well calculated to keep the mass of the people in a state of ignorance. They are either prohibited from embracing any religion of which they may make choice, nor compelled to contribute to the support of one they do not approve. The pains that have been taken to inculcate sober habits, to destroy mutual confidence, and render every man reserved and suspicious of his neighbour, could not fail to put an end to social intercourse. No meetings were held, even for convivial purposes, beyond the family circle, and these only at the festival of the new year. Those kinds of turbulent assemblies, where real or imagined grievances are discussed with all the rancour and violence that malicious insinuations against government, added to the effects of intoxicating draughts, so frequently inspire, are unknown among the Chinese. Contented with having no voice in the government, it has never occurred to them that they have any rights; and they certainly enjoy none but such as are liable to be invaded and trampled on whenever the sovereign or any of his representatives, from interest, malice, or caprice, think fit to exercise the power that is

within their grasp. The doctrine of employing resistance against oppression applied to the people and the government, is so contrary to every sentiment of the former, that the latter has little to fear on that score.”*

The Chinese histories give to their empire an incredible antiquity, to which they have adapted a fictitious chronology. To these extravagant accounts, Voltaire has attached an unwarrantable degree of credit ; and although he does not adopt them in their full extent, he allows to the empire more than four thousand years of duration.† Mr. Barrow and Sir George Staunton appear to be nearly of the same opinion. “It is,” says the former, “a singular phenomenon in the history of nations that the government of an empire of so vast magnitude as that of China, should have preserved its stability without any material change for more than two thousand years ; for setting aside their pretensions to an extravagant antiquity, for which, however, they have some grounds, there can be no doubt that they were pretty much in the same state, regulated by the same laws, and under the same form of government as they now are, four hundred

* Barrow's Travels in China, p. 394, &c.

† “Il est évident que l'empire de la Chine étoit formé il y a plus de quatre mille ans.” Voltaire Essai sur les mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations—Introduction.

years before the birth of Christ, about which time their renowned philosopher* flourished whose works are still held in the highest repute. They contain, indeed, all the maxims on which their government is yet grounded, and all the rules by which the different stations of life form their moral conduct; and the monarchy is supposed to have been established two thousand years before his time."† But M. de Guignes, to whom we owe the most recent accounts of China, says, and, indeed, seems to have proved, that this celebrated empire far from having existed twenty centuries or more before the christian æra, has not been united and established more than five hundred and twenty-nine years.‡ This writer also wholly disbelieves the astonishing accounts of the vast population of China, given by Staunton and Barrow, although resting on documents which ought to be considered as authentic, and corroborated by a train of judicious argumentation drawn from a variety of circumstances.

About a century ago, Europe was amused by pompous descriptions of the excellence of the Chinese government, and the happiness of the people. The accounts of recent travellers

* Confucius.

† Barrow's Travels in China, ubi supra.

‡ M. de Guignes' Voyage à Pekin, published at Paris, A. D. 1808.

have, in a great measure, dispelled these chimera. De Guignes agrees with Barrow in his exhibitions of the Chinese character, and of the state of society amongst that celebrated people. He observes, that certain authors regard the Chinese government as a pattern of political and legislative perfection. But “I have,” says he, “lived a long time in China. I have traversed this vast empire in its whole length: I have every where seen the strong oppress the weak; and every person who possessed any portion of authority, making use of it to vex, harass, and crush the people.” Mr. Barrow also says, that “A general character of rapacity, of an aim to make himself master of the property of another by cheating, or thieving, or robbery, or the abuse of authority, distinguishes a Chinese whenever he can do it with impunity.”†

It must, indeed, be confessed, that in consequence of the jealous policy of the government in not permitting foreigners to travel in China, our knowledge, both of the country and the people, is confined within narrow limits. Sir Geo. Staunton, however, by translating the *Ya Tsing Leu Lee*, or code of Chinese laws, has shewn in what manner that vast empire is

* De Guignes' Voyage à Peking, tom. 2. p. 438, &c.

† Barrow's Travels in China, p. 179.

governed, and so numerous a population not only held in exact order and obedience, but fashioned to a particular standard of sentiments and ideas. He observes that China possesses many political and moral advantages to which there is nothing exactly parallel in any European nation. "These," he says, "are to be ascribed to their system of universal and early marriage, except, indeed, so far as that system may be considered as conducive to the misfortune of a redundant population ; to the sacred regard that is habitually paid to the ties of kindred ; to the sobriety, the industry, and even the intelligence of the lower classes ; to the almost total absence of feudal rights and privileges ; to the equable distribution of landed property ; to the natural indisposition of the government and people to an indulgence in ambitious projects of foreign conquest ; and lastly, to a system of penal laws, if not the most just and equitable, at least the most comprehensive and uniform, and the most suited to the genius of the people for whom it is designed, perhaps, of any that ever existed."* The Chinese laws are not calculated for political happiness ; but for the repression of disorder and the gentle coercion of a vast popu-

* Staunton's Translation of the Ya Tsing Leu Lee, or Code of Chinese Laws, preface p. 11.

lation no better were ever devised: in the respect their excellence is proved by their efficacy.

Although the immense population of China appears to be completely moulded to the views of the government, yet in an empire of so vast extent, the ambition of the great officers of the state in distant provinces might excite dangerous revolts. But occurrences of this nature are guarded against with the most cautious sagacity. The Chinese government is extremely jealous of any tumultuary movement amongst the people, but still more of any tendency to the usurpation of power on the part of its remote delegates. The following extraordinary law shews the suspicious jealousy of the imperial court of Peking respecting this matter. "If any officer belonging to any of the departments of government or any private individual should address the emperor in praise of the virtues, abilities, or successful administration of any of his majesty's confidential ministers of state, it is to be considered as evidence of the existence of a treasonable combination subversive of government, and shall therefore be investigated with the utmost strictness and accuracy: the cause and origin of these interested praises of persons high in rank and office being traced, the offending party shall suffer death by decapitation, after

remaining the usual time in prison.—His wives and children shall become slaves, and his property shall be confiscated.”* This singular exhibition of despotic jealousy shews the excessive caution of the Chinese government in preventing the mandarins in the remote provinces of the empire from forming any connexion with the people. Such a law cannot but tend to promote that system of tyranny and oppression so generally exercised by the provincial governors and public officers, as nothing is to be gained, but much to be lost by popular favour, which never fails to expose the possessor to the suspicion and resentment of the court.

In every country, whether semi-barbarian or highly civilized, the effects of one particular institution or law are often very conspicuous. Various circumstances tend to shew that the government and legislation of China have entirely fashioned the character, the minds, and manners of its vast population. From the strict and regular order prevailing through every department of the state, and the great care that is taken to prevent, to repress, or to punish every thing tending to tumult or violence, the character of the Chinese has acquired an appearance of mildness, and even

* Sir Geo. Staunton's Translation, p. 62--63.

of the most ceremonious politeness; but it is totally devoid of benevolence. Acts of injurious violence are, perhaps, less common and less to be apprehended in China than in most other countries; but compassion to the unfortunate, and kind assistance to those who are in distress, are scarcely to be expected. This unfeeling disposition of the Chinese is ascribed by Mr. Barrow to an absurd and singular law which ordains, that if a wounded man be taken into the charge of any person, even with a view to effect his recovery, and happen to die under his hands, the person into whose care he was last taken, is liable to be punished with death, unless he can produce undeniable evidence how the wound was made, or that he survived it the space of forty days. The consequence of such a law is, that if a person happen to be mortally wounded by accident, or in an affray, he is suffered to die in the streets, from the fear, should any one take charge of him, of being made responsible for his death. "A striking instance of the fatal effects of such a law," says Mr. Barrow, "happened lately at Canton. A fire broke out in the suburbs, and three Chinese, in helping to extinguish it, had their limbs fractured and were otherwise dreadfully wounded by the falling of a wall. The surgeon of the English factory, with all the alacrity to administer

lief to suffering humanity, which characterizes the profession in Britain, directed them to be carried to the factory, and was preparing to perform amputation, as the only possible means of saving their lives, when one of the English merchants, having heard what was going forward, ran with great haste to the place, and intreated the surgeon by no means to think of performing any operation upon them, but to suffer them to be taken away from the factory as speedily as possible, adding, that however good his intentions might be, if any one of his patients should die under his hands, he would inevitably be held for murder, and the most mitigated punishment would be that of banishment for ever into the wilds of Tartary. The wounded Chinese were accordingly removed privately, and, no doubt, abandoned to their fate."* Mr. Barrow adduces various other instances of that unfeeling and hard hearted disposition which prevails among all classes of society in China.

One of the most remarkable circumstances of this great empire is, that the people, after a very early and considerable progress in all the arts of civilization, have, during the space of twenty centuries, made no further advance-

* Barrow's Travels in China, p. 164, &c.

ment.* It is almost universally agreed, that of all the nations now existing in the world the Chinese were among the first that attained to any considerable degree of refinement, and that they were civilized and enlightened to the same extent as at present more than two thousand years ago, at a period when all Europe, except Greece and Italy, might be regarded as barbarous; but ever since that time they have been stationary and even in some respects retrograde. The history of this great empire, although immensely voluminous is not sufficiently clear and authentic to develope the causes of this phenomenon; for China has not, like Greece, lost her national existence, nor has she, like Italy, been broken into small principalities. The imperial succession in China has undergone various revolutions; but the empire, although sometimes violently agitated by internal commotions has generally been in a state of progressive aggrandizement; and even when conquered by the Manchus, in the year 1644, its laws and institutions were adopted by the conquerors. The Chinese were the instructors of

* Although M. de Guignes' opinion may be right respecting the establishment of the Chinese empire, in its present extent, at so late a period as the 13th century, yet it is sufficiently proved that their great philosopher and legislator Confucius flourished four centuries before the christian era, and that China, although divided into several kingdoms, had then made a considerable progress in civilization.

the Tartars, as the Greeks formerly were of the Romans. In falling under the dominion of foreigners, they scarcely experienced any change, except that of the dynasty ; and from all that we can gather from their history, it does not appear that this revolution had any prejudicial effects on their national character. The unprogressive state of the Chinese, in regard to the arts and sciences, cannot be ascribed to any deficiency of genius. The same powers of intellect which carried them to a certain pitch of knowledge and civilization, would, unless counteracted by other causes, have carried them still further. The stupendous canals, and other works of public and private utility, afford a convincing proof that the people of this empire do not want genius to plan nor dexterity to execute ; and it is universally acknowledged that they possess in an eminent degree the powers of imitation. Of this the gentlemen of the English embassy while at Yuen-min-yuen had the opportunity of observing some remarkable instances. "The complicated glass lustres, consisting of several hundred pieces, were taken down piece by piece in the course of half an hour by two Chinese, who had never seen any thing of the kind before, and were put up again by them with equal facility ; yet Mr. Parker thought it necessary that the English mechanics should

attend several times at his warehouse, to see them taken down and again put together, in order to be able to manage the business on their arrival."* As another instance of the ingenuity, Mr. Barrow relates that a Chinese undertook to cut a slip of glass from a large curved piece, intended to cover the great dome of the planetarium, and immediately succeeded, after the English artificers had broken three similar pieces in attempting to cut them with the diamond; but the man performed this difficult task in secret, and could not be prevailed on to disclose the method by which it was accomplished. The same writer states it as a fact well known, that a Chinese in Canton, on being shewn an European watch, undertook to make one like it and succeeded, although he had never before seen any thing of the kind, only it was necessary to furnish him with a mainspring; and Mr. Barrow adds that they now fabricate in Canton, as well as in London, and at one third of the expence, all those ingenious pieces of mechanism which at one time were sent to China in great quantities from the repositories of Coxe and Merlin.† It is evident therefore that it is not any defect of genius in the people of China, but solely the pride or policy of the government, in affecting

* Barrow's Trav. in China, p. 306, 307.

† Barrow ubi supra.

to despise every thing new or foreign, and the general want of encouragement to new inventions that have checked the progress of the arts and sciences in that celebrated empire.

To the same political causes, seconded by certain physical circumstances, the contempt for foreign commerce, so conspicuous amongst the Chinese, must undoubtedly be ascribed. It is one of the principles of the government to discourage, as little as possible, any intercourse between its subjects and foreigners; and as it has fashioned the minds of the people to the model of its policy, they have imbibed a general contempt for foreign trade. The empire extending from the 20th to the 42 deg. N. lat. enjoys a great variety of climate, and abounds in the productions both of the torrid and the temperate zone. In countries less extensive or less favourably circumstanced, manufactures require the support of foreign trade, without which they could not flourish. At the great extent of China, the multitude of its inhabitants, the variety of climate and consequently of productions in its different provinces, and the easy communication by means of the numerous canals, render the home market capable of supporting very considerable manufactures. The celebrated author "The Wealth of Nations," supposes, with a small degree of probability, that the home

market of China is, in extent, not much inferior to that of all Europe.* And if the account of the population, which Sir George Staunton received at Peking, be correct, the supposition of Dr. Smith seems not to be unfounded. In a country therefore of so vast an extent, and abounding in such a variety of productions, the internal trade is equivalent to a very considerable foreign commerce, which therefore is far less necessary to the public welfare in China than in states which are confined within narrower limits, and comprise a less numerous population. The geographical position of China is also such as could have no tendency to excite a spirit of foreign commerce. Situated at the eastern extremity of Asia, and bounded on the west by countries producing nearly the same commodities, and by barbarian Tartars on the north, the Chinese had no neighbours with whom they could conveniently trade. It is therefore no wonder that they should learn to despise those commercial enterprises to which neither the policy of the government nor the situation of the country afforded any encouragement.†

The position of the country has also contributed, in no small degree, to render the Chinese

* Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. 3, p. 31.

† "Your beggarly commerce" was the language used by the mandarins of Peking to the Russian envoy when discoursing on the subject. Vide Bell's *Travels*, 2, p. 258 and 276.

unwarlike nation. Timidity and caution appear to be conspicuous traits in their character, and by some are ascribed to the frequency of corporal punishment. The bamboo is the moral panacea of China, and every subject, from the highest ministers of state to the lowest peasant, is equally liable to be punished by a certain number of strokes, in proportion to their offences. But, as no disgrace is attached to this punishment, it cannot have any peculiar effect on the courage of the people. It is not the pain, but the shame and dishonour attending corporal punishments, in most countries, that can have any tendency to depress the spirits and diminish courage. The Chinese appear to be deficient in the talents and virtues requisite in a military life; but their unwarlike character may, with the greatest probability, be ascribed to the situation of their country, bordered on the east by the ocean, and on every other side by mountains and deserts almost impassable to armies, and by nations greatly inferior in strength. Since the establishment of the Manshur dynasty, the Chinese have not had an enemy that could call into action any considerable portion of their military force.

If we were well acquainted with what passes in the interior of China, and with the particulars of the state of society throughout that vast

empire, every trait of the national character which appears to be in some respects an object of contempt and in others of admiration, might undoubtedly be traced to its true and original source. The timidity, the hypocrisy, the cringing servility, the selfishness, and other vices so remarkable among the Chinese, are nothing but the effects of that blasting despotism under which they live, and which runs through every ramification of the government and every gradation of office.*

The government of China is, by a sort of fiction, considered as patriarchal. The emperor is the absolute despot over many millions of families, to whose welfare it is impossible that his individual inspection should extend; yet he is regarded as the common father of all his subjects. He exercises over them the same authority as the father of a family, in the patriarchal ages, exercised over his particular household, and is placed above the control of laws. Conformably to this system, the governor of a province, representing the person of the sovereign, is considered as the father of the district over which he presides; and the head of any office or department is supposed to preside over it with the same authority, interest, and affection.

* L'Eveque considers the Chinese as the most vicious of all nations. L'Eveque, 7—p. 196. His opinion, however, is not sufficiently well grounded.

tion, as the father of a family superintends and manages the concerns of private life.* Such are the ideas and sentiments which it is the unvarying policy of the Chinese government to instil into the minds of the people, and which tend, in no small degree, to insure their obedience and preserve the public tranquillity. This government, however, although nominally patriarchal, pretending to be that of a father, and considered as such by the subjects, is evidently calculated to keep them in a state of childhood; nor is it possible, that without great change in their political circumstances, they should ever emerge from their minority.

In China, the government is the source of almost all moral influence. There is no national religion to sway the minds of the people, or regulate their conduct. The religion of the court is that of the Lama; the literati in general profess themselves the disciples of Confucius; and the people adhere to the doctrines of Fo, and various other systems of idolatry. But the religious ideas of the Chinese are vague and indeterminate, and have very little influence on the national character. China, indeed, is one of the very few countries where religion is not made an engine of state policy. Government is there the universal and omnipo-

* Barrow's Travels in China, p. 359.

tent agent in producing moral effects ; but the physical circumstances of the empire, especially its situation, which renders it a sort of world within itself, having little connexion with other nations, have been extremely favourable to the views of its rulers, and afforded them an excellent opportunity of moulding the mind and character of the people into the form that appeared the most convenient.

We may here observe, that China presents the extreme of despotism, as Athens and Rome formerly exhibited the extremes of popular freedom. These extremes produced a corresponding difference of character. The Athenians and Romans, during the flourishing ages of their respective republics, were haughty, proud, and independent, displaying on every occasion the most undaunted courage and the most inflexible patriotism, the natural consequences of the freedom which they enjoyed and the share which each citizen had in the government. The Chinese, on the contrary, are timid, deceitful, cringing, and selfish vices which invariably originate from political slavery. They have the same passions and affections as the ancient Greeks and Romans ; but the despotism of their government, and the punctilious strictness of their laws, prevent them from acquiring independence of mind or energy of character. Whee

The most trifling actions of men are measured by an exact legal scale, when their words and most their very thoughts are rigidly scrutinized by despotic rulers, they naturally learn to conceal their sentiments under the veil of hypocrisy; and that deceit, which the terrors of despotism inspire, becoming habitual, characterizes their conduct even in private life, and pervades the whole system of society.

Next to China, the Ottoman empire presents the most extensive system of complete despotism now existing in the world. But in many respects both the moral and physical circumstances of the Chinese and the Turks have, during many centuries, been widely different. Issuing from the centre of Asia, and making their way by progressive conquests towards Europe, the Turks distinguished themselves as a martial people: but they never made any great progress in the arts of peace, and even in war they have long been retrograde. This national apathy cannot arise from physical causes, for they inhabit the same countries on which the genius and activity of the ancient Greeks have conferred a lasting celebrity. It must, therefore, be ascribed to their institutions, which are fundamentally adverse to improvement. The genius and structure of their political system being entirely military, required the constant exercise of the warlike

talents to keep it in vigour. Cessation from war soon shewed the defects of a government which had made no provision for a system of peace. When the limits of the Turkish empire became fixed, and the conquered nations had sunk into unqualified submission, the tranquillity which ensued, proved fatal to its power; for the strength and permanence of a military state depend on providing incessant occupation for its troops. Under a pacific system, the janissaries were allowed to abate the strictness of their ancient discipline; and like the prætorian guards of Rome, they soon became the terror instead of the support of the government. The sultans themselves, no longer roused by those great events which called forth the talents and stimulated the exertions of their predecessors, sunk into voluptuousness and indolence; and the great offices of the state were given to favourites who were destitute of all military claims to promotion. Occasional wars with the Russians and Austrians have prevented the total extinction of Turkish valour and discipline, but the jarring interests and mutual jealousies of the European powers are the surest support of the Ottoman monarchy.

The Turkish government is in its structure not less despotic than that of China; but its rigour is considerably moderated by the power

f religion. The doctrines and precepts of the Koran constitute a political code as well as a religious system; and the laws enacted by Mahomed himself, are regarded as inviolable. It is true that the grand seignor, having the appointment of the mufti, is supreme in religion as well as in government; but he knows that any direct violation of the laws of the Koran, would shake the foundations of his throne; for notwithstanding the despotism of the Ottoman monarchy, numerous instances recorded in its history shew, that there is scarcely a place in the world where it is more necessary to respect public opinion than at Constantinople.

That the Turks are a more warlike people than the Chinese, is a necessary effect of their situation. Their wars with the great powers of Europe, whose armies are numerous and well skilled in tactics, have preserved some remains of their martial genius, while the Chinese are but little acquainted with hostilities. But a particular circumstance in the social system of Turkey, and which is wholly unknown in China, contributes, perhaps, more than any other to the difference of character by which the people of these two empires are visibly distinguished. In China, every person who is in no public office, sees himself placed in the most abject situation, with every

thing above him and no human being below him. - In the Ottoman dominions, jews and christians are numerous: over these the Turk is the master, and treats them with greater contempt than the Romans ever shewed to the people of conquered provinces. As every Roman citizen esteemed himself superior to kings, the meanest Turk thinks himself superior to christians and jews, whatever may be their rank or their riches; and these ideas of self-importance, produce a haughtiness of air and character very different from the abject diffidence of the Chinese.

The greater part of the European monarchies are despotic, there being no constitutional check on the power of the sovereign; but as in these the government is generally administered with equity and mildness by enlightened princes and able ministers, they are far from resembling the Asiatic despotisms, and the difference of national character which they produce is not very considerable. There are few of these governments that do not more or less, patronize and endeavour to promote arts, sciences, letters, and commerce. Universities and academies, with other literary and scientific institutions, are established in every country in this quarter of the globe, and the same studies and pursuits, although somewhat varied according to casual circum-

ances, are generally common to all. Europe may now be considered as an immense commonwealth, having all its parts intimately connected by mutual interests and general intercourse, a circumstance which produces a greater uniformity of character, especially amongst persons of a liberal education, than might be expected in countries so different from each other in regard to their civil and religious institutions as well as their physical circumstance.

To accommodate the structure of political systems and civil institutions to the exigencies of different nations and ages, is an important and difficult task; and to determine by any general rule what form of government is the most conducive to human happiness, is a problem of no very easy solution, as it depends on a variety of circumstances often so multiform and minute as to elude investigation. It is almost universally agreed, that the system which allows the greatest share of liberty to the subject, is the most eligible. But it must, at the same time, be remembered, that if individual conduct required no restraint, government of any kind would be unnecessary. Political liberty is certainly the basis of national prosperity and happiness; but its measure must be adapted to the state of society. Some nations are not sufficiently

civilized to be intrusted with any great degree of liberty, or to make a just estimate of its benefits. The freedom which British subjects enjoy, if allowed to the inhabitants of Turkey or China, would produce nothing but licentiousness and anarchy. Morals and intellect must be cultivated and improved, before nations can derive any advantages from a free constitution. Generous efforts have recently been made by the sovereigns of Russia to relieve the peasantry of their empire from feudal restraints; and in their laudable attempts they appear to have proceeded as far as was consistent with public safety. The name of the feudal system strikes the inhabitants of a free country with horror; but it is far less terrific to those who live under its influence and experience all its evils; and it is doubtful whether the Russian peasantry are so anxiously desirous of enfranchisement as an Englishman would suppose. The Prince De Ligne, speaking of Russia, says "The subjects of this empire, whom we have the goodness so often to pity, would not concern themselves about your states general: they would beseech the philosophers not to enlighten them, and the great lords not to permit them to hunt on their grounds."*

* "Les Sujets de cet empire qu' on a la bonte de plaindre si souvent ne se soucieraient pas de vos etats generaux: ils prieroient les philosophes

instituted, that men conform themselves with wonderful pliability to all the varieties of social situation ; and it has frequently been observed, that even in countries where the feudal system prevails, the inhabitants display cheerfulness of temper that would astonish a native of Britain or of any other country where its multiplied evils no longer exist.*

From these remarks and considerations it will appear, that different degrees of liberty are adapted to the different stages of civilization ; and that if the freedom of the British constitution were suddenly established in Russia, such a revolution would, in all probability, throw the whole empire into confusion. Systems which have existed for ages, taken deep root, and extended their ramifications through every department of a vast community, command implicit obedience as if they were parts of the order of nature, and every change in their structure ought to be gradual, and introduced with caution. The happiness of the subjects is the amelioration of their condition, when the state of public affairs and the circumstances of society render it practicable, ought to be the grand object of every government ;

pas les éclairer et les grands seigneurs de ne pas leur permettre d'essayer sur leurs terres." *Lettres et Pensées du Mareschal Prince de Soubise*, tom. 1. p. 131.

Leisbeck's Travels. Took's Russian Empire.

but the terrific effects of the French revolution afford a convincing and awful proof of the danger of adopting political theories, that are visionary in their aim, and hazardous in their progress.

✓ It is unreasonable to expect perfection in man or his works, and impossible that the most enlightened statesmen and legislators should adapt their systems of government and laws to all the infinite complexity of cases resulting from the ever changing circumstances of society, or anticipate the endless variations of national interest or human delinquency. The best political system, therefore, is that of which the principles are permanent, but capable of a varied application according to times and circumstances.

In every country where despotism does not, as in Turkey and China, level all distinctions among the subjects, the whole mass of the nation may, in a political view, without regarding the more minute gradations or classifications, be considered as consisting of two great bodies, the aristocracy and the democracy. As it is necessary that, in order to preserve the tranquillity and promote the welfare of the state, the interests of both parties should be consulted, and as much as possible united, it is consequently expedient that, in countries where the people are sufficiently enlightened

be intrusted with the privileges of a free constitution, both the aristocratic and democratic bodies should concur in making the laws by which the whole is to be governed. And as the union of the legislative and the executive powers in the same hands must produce either despotism or anarchy, it is easy to perceive the expediency of the monarchical branch of government in an extensive empire. A limited monarchy like that of Great Britain, which serves as a pattern to foreign kingdoms, and has, with few variations, been recently adopted by France and Sicily, is of all others the best adapted to promote public prosperity and private happiness. Being a judicious and well proportioned mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, it unites all the advantages of the monarchical and republican systems without their inconveniences, and constitutes the most perfect plan of government ever devised by human wisdom. It gives to the monarch the power and splendour suitable to a regal office and dignity, while it affords equal protection to the person and the property of the nobleman and the peasant. It encourages genius and industry : and while it provides powerful checks to inordinate ambition, it promotes a spirit of laudable enterprise. The influence of such a political system on the character and circumstances of the people, is

sufficiently visible in their crowded ports, their extensive commerce, and their immense manufactures; for whatever national prejudice may suggest, or ignorance may suppose, Great Britain is equalled by many, and surpassed by some countries, in the advantages arising from soil and climate. If, therefore, Great Britain be the most opulent and powerful monarchy on the face of the globe, a fact which will scarcely be disputed, it is evident that she owes her riches and splendour not to any physical superiority over other nations, but to the excellence of her political constitution.

CHAP. VI.

RELIGION.

all the moral causes that influence both individual and national character, it is doubtful whether any one be more powerful than religion. Its operation, how imperceptible ever it may appear, is constant and permanent, although often silent and secret. In those moments of privacy, when the thoughts and actions of men are concealed under an impenetrable veil of obscurity, when government and laws cease from having any influence, the impressions which it makes on the mind are often irresistible. In estimating the force of moral impulses, religion may, therefore, be regarded as one of the strongest, and its operation on the human character deemed equal, at least, to that of any other social institution. In treating this subject, it is necessary to

draw a line of distinction between the false and true systems: the former are merelly human institutions, founded on the hopes and fears of mankind, and artfully modelled to particular purposes: the latter constitute the connexion and intercourse between the soul of man and his maker, independent of political regulations and human control.

A sense of religion is natural to man, being founded on his hopes and his fears. The circumstances of his present and future existence impress it strongly on his mind. All human life being subject to an infinite number of fortuitous accidents, and all futurity hid in a mysterious abyss of impenetrable darkness, such a prospect around and before them, would in the most barbarous ages, excite men to the earnest inquiry concerning the invisible powers who dispose of happiness and misery.* The learned and celebrated author of the "Divine Legation of Moses" very justly observes, that "The worship of superior powers, the supposed causes of extraordinary events, and the authors of good and evil, is natural to man in his rudest condition, and necessarily proceeds from hope and fear, the two mainsprings of the human soul."† The ancient legislators wisely took advantage of this irresistible power

* Hume's Nat. Hist. Relig. sect. 3.

† Warburton's Divine Legation Book, 3. sect. 4.

nsity, in order to restrain the licentiousness, and regulate the conduct of mankind.* Dr. Arbuthnot has fallen into an egregious error saying, that the magistrate was called in to the aid of religion.† The case was exactly the reverse: religion was called in to the aid of the magistrate. Minos, the famed legislator of Crete, pretended that his laws were dictated by Jupiter.‡ Menes, in Egypt, promulgated his code in the name of the god Hermes.§ Lycurgus, at Sparta, claimed the authority and sanction of Apollo.|| Numa, for all his pretensions at Rome, pretended to have the divine command of the gods, communicated to him by the nymph Egeria ¶ Almost all the legislators of antiquity, published their laws in the name and by the authority of the celestial powers, in order to attract the veneration and ensure the obedience of the people. If these pretensions would have been absurd and ridiculous, had not the existence of superior beings been already the popular

Augustine De Civit. Dei lib. 4. chap. 32.

Divine Legation Book, 1. sect. 2.

Plato in Minoe ap. Russell's Ancient History, vol. 1. p. 163.

Herod. Sicul. lib. 1. p. 84.

Plutarch Vita Lycurgi.

Plutarch lib. 1. chap. 19. Plutarch Vita Numæ. To the legislators mentioned we may add Odin, in Scandinavia, or Scythia; Mahomed, in Arabia: Mango Capac, in Peru; and others, who all pretended to derive their missions from divine authority.

creed. It is evident, therefore, that religion existed before the establishment of political systems. The first legislators made the current opinions of the people, the basis on which they erected their artificial superstructure. The poets acted in a similar manner: Homer and Hesiod embellished, but did not invent the Grecian mythology.

The Delphic oracle was an object of superstitious veneration among the neighbouring peasantry, before it was noticed by the legislators and rulers of Greece: they afterwards used it as an engine of policy, in order to sanction their designs by the approbation of heaven. The augurs at Rome exercised functions similar to those of the managers of the oracle of Delphi. They interpreted to the people the will of the gods, by signs in the heavens, the air, or the earth, by inspecting the entrails of victims, by the flying, chirping, and feeding of birds.* Sage legislators and rulers of nations could never have attached any importance to such absurdities had they not perceived that these superstitions had taken fast hold on the minds of the people. But that being the case, they wisely converted vulgar opinions into an engine of state policy.

* Auguries were in use at the time of the Trojan war. See the conversation between Hector and Polydamus. *Iliad* lib. 12.

Numa Pompilius established a college of augurs at Rome, and by that institution gave them an additional importance. By their celestial authority, they could put a negative on the most important resolutions, both of the senate and the assembly of the people.* They were, therefore, an excellent instrument in the hands of the chief magistrate, who, by their influence, could carry into execution, measures which it would have been hazardous to attempt by his own authority. The greatest philosophers, legislators, and statesmen among the Greeks and the Romans, despised both oracles and auguries, with the whole train of superstitious illusion interwoven in the system of their religion; but they considered them as useful in governing an ignorant and turbulent populace.

The effects of religion may be traced through all the scenes of the moral world. Its influence on the human mind, however, is disputed, and even denied by a writer of considerable celebrity. "The conduct of men and of nations," says Helvetius, "is rarely consistent with their belief, or even their speculative opinions. These principles are always fruitless." And again, "If I should establish the most absurd opinion, and from which the most detestable

consequences might be drawn, if I make no alteration in the laws, I should make no change in the manners of the people.”* But Helvetius seems to have forgotten that laws and civil institutions depend very much on religion. “Temples,” says Dr. Turnbull, “have their sacred images, and we see what influence they have always had on a great part of mankind; but in truth the ideas and images in men’s minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them, and to these they all pay a ready submission.”† In the moral world opinion is the lever by which all is moved. The Arabians would not have adopted the koran had they not been made to believe its divine origin. The papal power would never have risen to its exorbitant height if the christian world had not been persuaded that the bishop of Rome was the successor of St. Peter, and the vicergerent of Christ; nor would protestants dispute his authority if they did not regard his lofty pretensions as totally groundless. The opinion so carefully inculcated in the seraglio and at the court of Constantinople, that death by the order of the sultan, is the highest degree of martyrdom, and a certain passport to paradise, induces the Turkish officers of state to submit with passive obedience their

* Helvetius on man, 2. p. 159.

† Dr. Turnbull’s Christ. Philos. p. 196.

ecks to the bowstring.* Numberless proofs might be adduced to shew that human conduct is powerfully influenced by speculative opinions.†

The history of the world shews, in almost every page, the influence of religion on the minds and manners of men, on social circumstances and national character. The religion of the Greeks was favourable to the active and cogitative powers of man. Jupiter was ever ready to support supreme sway when lawfully required and justly administered. Minerva was the constant guardian of valour, directed by prudence, and aided by skill. Mars gave victory to daring courage: Ceres assisted and rewarded the labours of the husbandman: Mercury presided over eloquence, mercantile transactions, and all the ingenious arts; while Apollo and the muses inspired the song of the poet, and raised his imagination to the height of divine enthusiasm. Thus every useful and

Vide Ricant, chap. 3 and 4. Ryan's Effects of Religion, p. 374. edit.

Who can deny, says Cicero, that these opinions are useful when he considers what internal stability the state derives from the religion of the people, and what security without from the holy rites that accompany national compacts? How efficacious the fear of divine punishment is to deter man from wickedness, and what purity of manners must reign in a community where the immortal gods themselves are supposed to interpose both as judges and witnesses. Cicero de Legib. lib. 1. cap. 7. "Such instructions as are transmitted from generation to generation under the name of maxims or doctrines, whether they be true or false, have a prodigious effect upon the conduct of those who admit them." Scher's Portrait of St. Paul, p. 284.

laudable pursuit had its celestial protector and patron; and the rewards held up to merit in the Grecian Elysium, tended to stimulate valour, and animate the exertions of genius and talents.*

All the circumstances connected with the religion of the Greeks, concurred to awake their genius as well as to embellish their poetry. "The sea was peopled with Tritons and Nereids, subjects of Neptune, the god of the watery element. Every river had its deity, every fountain its nymph or its naiad; and every mountain and wood their orcaides and driades. Venus, and her attendant graces hovered over female beauty: Hebe gave bloom to the youthful cheek: Cupid, ever frolicking among youths and maidens, inspired the amorous passion. Juno was the patroness of marriage, Hymen its attendant, and Diana the goddess and guardian of female innocence. Every social enjoyment, as well as every important pursuit, was under celestial influence and protection.

The first political institutions of the Greeks were in conformity with their theological ideas, and the religion of Greece was congenial with the spirit of liberty. Jupiter was invested with sovereign authority, but not with despotism.

* Vide Homer's *Odissey*, lib. 4. and Pindar's *Olymp.* 2.

rule. His conduct was sometimes arraigned by the inferior divinities: his measures were discussed, and their propriety often disputed in the assembly of the gods; and he was under the perpetual control of fate. The Grecian mythology, as Dr. Russell observes, exhibited a species of mixed monarchy, not unlike those which existed in Greece before the establishment of republican governments.

But if such a religion favoured human genius and exertion, it was highly inimical to morals. The gods and goddesses not only had the human form, but were subject to all the excesses of the human passions. They differed in nothing from the most corrupted human beings except in the possession of superior wisdom, power, and immortality. All of them had been guilty of violence, cruelty, fraud, or debauchery. The worship of such divinities could not inspire morality, nor repress licentiousness, but rather seemed to tolerate and excuse every vice. With their religion, the character of the Greeks appeared perfectly to coincide. They were adventurous, valiant, and ingenious; but scarcely any people were ever more vicious. They were turbulent under rule, unsteady in politics, cruel to slaves, tyrants to their wives, and addicted to unnatural vices.

The general corruption of their morals is ascribed by two of their most eminent historians

to the impurity and looseness of their theology.* All the allegories concerning the wars, rebellions, and adulteries of the gods, had either a physical or a moral meaning. But that meaning being above vulgar comprehension, they were believed in their literal sense by the multitude, who were consequently corrupted by divine example.

In delineating a picture of paganism, an essential distinction must be made between the religion of the learned and that of the vulgar. Aristotle asserts the existence of one only God, the good, the eternal, and supreme Being; and this was the doctrine and belief of all the philosophical heathens.† “All that multiplicity of gods,” says Cudworth, “which makes so great a shew and noise, was really nothing but several names and notions of one supreme deity according to his different manifestations in the world; so that one unmade, self-existent deity, and no more, was acknowledged by the more intelligent pagans.”‡ The Eleusinian mysteries seem to have been instituted for the purpose of purifying the minds of the initiated from the gross tenets of that mythology which was promulgated to the multitude, by inculcating the unity of God and the immortality of

* Dion Halicarnass, lib. 2. cap. 20. Polybius, 6, cap. 54.

† Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 2.

‡ Cudworth's Intellect. Syst. chap. 4, sec. 13

the human soul.* The most distinguished
 orator and philosopher that ancient Rome pro-
 duced, considers these mysteries as the greatest
 the benefits for which the world was in-
 debted to Athens. "It was she," says Cicero,
 that taught us not only to live happily, but
 to die with tranquillity, in the confidence of
 becoming yet more happy in a future state of
 existence.†

The religion of the enlightened pagans was,
 therefore, pure theism; but that of the vulgar
 was polytheism, and even gross idolatry; and
 it is somewhat astonishing that no attempt was
 made either by the Greeks or the Romans to
 reform and purify the popular theology. This
 can be accounted for only by supposing that
 their rulers knowing their religious systems to
 be founded on the current superstitions of the
 people, and closely connected with the govern-
 ment, apprehended that any innovation would
 be dangerous either to themselves or the state;
 and indeed the fate of Socrates, who suffered
 death at Athens for endeavouring to rectify
 the theological ideas of the people, was sufficient
 to deter succeeding philosophers from follow-
 ing his example. But exclusive of such con-

* The Eleusinian mysteries were solemn festivals, instituted A. A. C.
 99, by Erichon the 6th. king of Athens, in honour of Ceres, the
 goddess of the earth, and patroness of husbandry.

† Cicero de Leg. lib. 2.

siderations, the learned heathens did not think it in any respect necessary to enlighten the multitude on the subject of religion, which they regarded as a mystery above human comprehension, and wholly beyond the reach of uncultivated minds. They considered the religion of the people as nothing more than a legal establishment conducive to good order and the welfare of the state. Plato recommended the appointment of solemn festivals to the honour of the twelve principal gods of Greece; but he did not prescribe to the people the worship of one supreme Deity, because he regarded his essence as incomprehensible, and the most acceptable mode of worshipping him impossible to determine.* The priests might also be unwilling that the people should have any notion of communicating with heaven without their intervention and ministry. But whatever might be their reasons, the ancient legislators thought it dangerous to cure, and useful to confirm, the popular superstition.†

In estimating, therefore, the effects of religion among the Greeks and Romans, it is not the

* Plato de Leg. lib. 8.—See also Cudworth's *Intellect. Syst.* ch. 4. l.

† Bolingbroke's Works, 4. p. 51.—After describing the prevailing system of polytheism and idolatry, Bolingbroke says, "Thus the vulgar believed, and thus the priest encouraged, while the philosopher, overborne by the torrent of polytheism, suffered them thus to believe in ages when true theism was accounted atheism."—Bolingbroke's Works, 4. p. 200.

nions of the philosophers, but the notions of multitude in connexion with their public institutions that are chiefly to be regarded. The religion of these ancient nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. It was sely interwoven with every circumstance of public and private life. The most important concerns of peace and war were prepared and concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which both magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, participated. The influence of such a religion on the national character cannot be disputed, and, indeed, it is conspicuous in almost every page of ancient history.

A celebrated writer says, "It was neither piety nor piety that established religion among the Romans, but a conviction of its necessity in every society. Their first kings were not so attentive to the regulation of public worship and its ceremonies, than to the establishment of laws, and the construction of walls.* The institutions of Tatius and Numa had taken so much hold on the minds of the people, that when the regal government was abolished, the Romans, in their enthusiasm for liberty, had the audacity to cast off the yoke of religion.†

Montesquieu Grandeur et Decadence des Romains. Dissert. de la politique des Romains dans la Religion, p. 241.

Montesquieu ubi supra,

But it is not to be supposed that the Romans had received no religious impressions before their rulers regulated their superstitions, and digested them into a system; for as it has already been observed, the first legislators always made the current prepossessions of the people the basis of their religion.

When the Roman legislators formed their religious institutions, they followed the example of the Greeks, and gave no attention to the reformation of the manners or the fixing of the principles of morality, deeming it imprudent to impose too great restraints on men who were yet ignorant of the engagements of a society into which they had so recently been collected. They had only one general view,—that of inspiring the people with the fear of the gods, and making use of that fear in order to govern them with greater facility.

“The successors of Numa,” says Montaigne, “durst not complete what that prince had left deficient. The people having, in process of time, lost much of its primitive rudeness and ferocity, became capable of conforming itself to a more exact discipline. It would then have been easy to add to the ceremonial part of religion, the principles and rules of morality, which were still wanted.” But, says

celebrated writer, "the Roman legislators were too sagacious not to perceive the danger of such a reformation. It would have been an acknowledgement that their religion was defective, and would have weakened instead of strengthening its authority.* To a modern legislator, however, such a conduct will not appear to be a mark of superior sagacity ; but it would contribute to develop the views of the ancient legislators in not endeavouring to illuminate the minds of the people, by rectifying their theological ideas. Montesquieu seems to approve their conduct in this respect, by observing, that "Human institutions may be corrupted, but divine ordinances ought to be immutable like the gods themselves."† But this doctrine precludes every idea of reformation in religious establishments. Montesquieu ought to have remembered, that when religion becomes corrupted by human abuses, its corruption should be removed.

The first legislators of Rome copied the religion of the Greeks, but they purified its mythology. When Romulus consecrated temples, erected altars, and appointed festivals and sacrifices to the gods of Greece ; he rejected impious and blasphemous all traditional

Montesquieu *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains*, Dissert. de la chute des Romains dans la Religion, p. 242.

Montesquieu *ubi supra*.

fables of an indecent kind relative to the deities, and instructed the Romans to attribute to them no actions nor passions unworthy their exalted nature.* Numa Pompilius followed his example, and greatly extended the plan. And from the superior purity of Roman theology, when compared with that of the Greeks, the former displayed a superior strictness in morals. An ancient historian observes, that as among the Greeks, a man of office was rarely to be found whose hands were clean from peculation, so it was no less among the Romans to discover one that was stained with this crime. He further adds, that in their magistracies and embassies, the Romans disbursed the largest sums with inviolable honesty on the single obligation of an oath, and that a Roman citizen paid as much regard to his word or solemn engagement in private as to a written contract attested by witnesses.

Divination by oracles, auguries, and other similar means, which may be traced, with several variations, from Egypt and Babylon, to Greece and Rome, was an essential branch of the pagan religion, and a powerful instrument

* Dion. Halicarnass. lib. 2. chap. 18.

† Polybius lib. 6. chap. 54. This observation only applies to the purer ages of the Roman republic. Polybius wrote his history about two centuries before the christian era, when the Greeks were completely corrupted; and the Romans still retained a considerable portion of their primitive virtue.

hands of the rulers of nations. History, in numerous instances, shews its utility in the Greek and Roman systems of government, and its influence on the human mind. At Rome, the augurs could not pronounce any divination concerning public affairs, without the permission of the magistrates and senate, to whose views their art was entirely subservient. Opinions that may appear ridiculous to the wise, are often necessary in governing an ignorant multitude. The augurs and aruspices were a set of grotesque actors in the drama of humanism; but their art will not appear ridiculous, if we consider that, in a religion entirely popular, nothing could seem extravagant.* The Romans as well as the Greeks were a semi-barbarous people at the time when their religion was established; and the vulgar of all nations always remained ingulphed in superstition and ignorance. They were less affected by simple truths, than by subjects of admiration. They required signs of supernatural agency, and supposed them only to be found in what was marvellous and above their comprehension. It may indeed seem ridiculous to make the destiny of the republic depend on the appetite of a sacred fowl, or on the appearance of the

entrails of a victim ; but the legislators who introduced those ceremonies into their religious systems, knew to what purposes they might be rendered subservient ; and as Montesquieu observes, “ it was from good reasons that they violated the rules of reason.” If their religious rites had been more rational, persons of talent and genius might have been their dupes as well as the vulgar, and thus have lost all the advantages that were to be derived from popular superstition and ignorance. It was therefore requisite to have such institutions as might keep up the superstition of the people, and enter into the political views of their rulers ; and this was precisely the case with divinations. The declarations of heaven were put in the mouths of the principal senators, who perfectly knew both the absurdity and the utility of things of this nature. The Roman writers inform us how greatly the arts of divination were venerated by the people and despised by the principal philosophers, legislators, and commanders of armies.* The magistrates being masters of the presages, possessed the most effectual means of ruling the suffrages in the popular assemblies. The augurs and aruspices, who always accompanied the armies

* Vide Cicero de Divinatione lib. 2. cap. 35. and cap. 18. See also in Julio Cæsarè Plutarch in Vita Crassi, &c.

the instruments of the generals rather than interpreters of the will of the gods. If an unfavourable presage happened to intimidate the soldiers, a sagacious commander could diminish their fears by giving it a favourable interpretation. Scipio falling to the ground, in consequence of a slip of the foot in landing on the African coast, took some of the earth in his hands and exclaimed, "I hold thee, Africa." At this acute turn he converted a menacing presage into an omen of success, and reanimated the courage of his troops. Lucullus, on about to give battle to Tigranes, king of Armenia, being told that the day was one of those that were accounted unfortunate, answered, "So much the better, we shall render it propitious by victory." Sometimes the Romans cut the gordian knot when they found that it could not be loosed. One of their commanders, on about to commence a naval engagement, threw the sacred fowls into the sea, saying, "The gods would compel them to drink since they refused to eat.*" The Roman generals, however, adopted so daring a conduct at their own peril, and if they proved unsuccessful were sometimes punished for disregarding the presages; because it was necessary to make the people believe that public misfortunes did not

* Valer. Maxim. lib. 1. cap. 4.

proceed from any weakness in the state, or a defect in its constitution, but from the impiety of one of its citizens, who had incurred the displeasure of heaven. By this means the public confidence was easily restored: a few religious ceremonies and sacrifices were all that was requisite. When Rome was menaced or afflicted by any calamity, the cause was immediately investigated, and the misfortune was always ascribed to the anger of some of the gods whose worship had been neglected. The city was in consequence purified by sacrifices, processions, and other religious rites: the same measures were sometimes adopted in the armies; the soldiers as well as the people believed that the divine indignation was appeased, and resumed all their courage and confidence.* Religion was the powerful engine by which the rulers of Rome governed a numerous and turbulent people, and rendered their city mistress of the world.

The patriotism, the valour, the greatness and glory of Rome rested on the basis of religion. The capital placed in a most commanding situation, overlooking the forum immediately below, and affording a prospect of the whole city, and of Latium as far as the A-

* Montesquieu *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains*.—Dissertation la politique des Romains dans la Religion, p. 240.

ount and the Appenines, was both a fortress and a sanctuary, surrounded with precipices crowded with temples and altars, the repository of the fatal oracles, and the seat of the telar deities of the empire. "Here," says an elegant writer, "stood the temple of Jupiter apitolinus on a hundred steps, supported by thousand pillars, adorned with all the rements of art, and blazing with the plunder the universe. In the centre of the temple th Juno on his left and Mercury on his ht side, the thunderer sat on a throne of ld, grasping the lightning in one hand, and the other wielding the sceptre of the universe. ther the consuls were conducted by the ate to assume the military dress and implore favour of the gods before they marched to tle. Hither the victorious generals used to air in triumph, to suspend the spoils of conered nations, present captive monarchs, and er up Hecatombs to Tarpeian Jove. Here, eases of danger and distress, the senate was embled, and the magistrates convened to liberate in the presence and under the im- diate influence of the gods of Rome."

A sense of religion accompanied the Romans he camp as well as in the city. The at- tachment of the troops to their standard was ired by the united influence of religion honour. The golden eagles called by

Tacitus, "*Bellorum Dii*," "the gods of war," glittering in the front of the legions were the objects of their pious enthusiasm; nor was it esteemed less impious than it was ignominious to abandon the sacred ensigns in the hour of danger. A religion so intimately connected with government and war, procured for the Romans the sovereignty of the world: it kept up their courage, confirmed their patriotism, and contributed no less than their political system to render them a nation of legislators and warriors, sagacious in politics and irresistible in arms. Montesquieu declares it to be his opinion that the epicurean philosophy, which was introduced into Rome towards the end of the republic, greatly contributed to the corruption of the people; and he observes that it had produced the same effects among the Greeks.* These observations appear to be well grounded; for it is certain that the Romans, in relaxing their religious principles and maxims, lost the energy of their national character.

It was not only among the more civilized and enlightened nations of antiquity that the influence of religion was conspicuous and powerful. Ignorance of the attributes of God, of the duties and destines of man, and of the

* Montesquieu *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains*, chap. 10. p. 84.

various phenomena which nature displays, has been, in all ages, the source of superstition. The barbarian was, therefore, exposed to all its terrors. Men of superior minds, the founders of political and sacerdotal systems, though rude and illiterate, soon learned by experience the use of every artifice that could preserve and fortify impressions so well calculated to bridle, impel, or direct the impetuous passions of the people. The magistrate, aided by the priest, could assume an authority which, without such support, he durst not have ventured to exercise; and the most ferocious soldier would patiently submit to correction when he considered it as not inflicted by any human power, but by the authority of the god of war.*

Among the ancient barbarians, especially those of the north, who were known to the Romans by the various names of Cimbri, Germans, and Goths, the influence of religion was used as a powerful engine to impel the people to rapine and carnage. On coming to action with an enemy, the consecrated standards† were displayed in the front of the battle; and the hostile army was devoted with dire execra-

*Æt. de Morib. German, chap. 7.

†The Alani, a people seated between the Don and the Volga, had no other visible object of religious worship than a naked scimeter stuck in the ground. Gibb. Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 4. chap. 26. p. 373.

tions to the god of war.* Cowardice was according to their creed, the most unpardonable of sins. A brave warrior was the greatest favourite of their martial deities; but the wretch who lost his shield, was expelled from the religious as well as the civil assemblies of his countrymen. They believed in a state of rewards and punishments in another world; but the paradise which they expected, was a scene of eternal feasting and drunkenness; and they considered a life spent in arms, and a glorious death in battle, as the best, and indeed, the only preparation for a happy futurity.

The Gothic mythology was far more martial as well as more dismal and gloomy than that of the Greeks and Romans.† It was, indeed, above all other systems of religion calculated to inspire its votaries with a propensity to war, plunder, and havoc. The principal article of the Gothic or Scandinavian creed, was that the palace of Valhalla, the eternal abode

* Tacit. de Morib. Germanorum, chap. 7. and Id. Annal. lib. 2. chap. 57.

† In this instance, the influence of climate, and other local circumstances may, in some degree, be recognized, and the propriety of Chateaubriant's remarks, quoted at the conclusion of the first chapter of this work, must be acknowledged. But even here moral circumstances seem to have had a greater share in producing the grand effect. The Gothic theology had been collected from the superstitions of a people, not only inhabiting infertile regions, under gloomy skies, and a rigorous climate, but living in a most barbarous state of society.

the gods, Odin received the souls of those who were slain in battle. In that magnificent dwelling the souls of the valiant were supposed to enjoy the daily pleasure of arming themselves, of ranging in order of battle, and of cutting each other to pieces. But at the hour of dinner, they returned free from pain, wounds, and animosity, to feed on the flesh of the boar Scrimner, which was believed to be daily renewed, and to intoxicate themselves with mead, served up to them by virgins called Valkeries, in the skulls of their enemies. But those who fled in battle, or died of sickness, or of age, were, according to their creed, condemned to Nistheim, the hell of Scandinavia, a dismal region of eternal frost and snow, and an assemblage of all the horrors that can shock the imagination. Another important doctrine of their religion, which contributed in no small degree to increase the desperate courage conspicuous in the character of the northern barbarians, was that of a destiny or fatality which no power of men or even of gods, except that of Odin himself, could avert or control.

Reason may infer, and history shews the useful influence of such a mythology on the passions, the sentiments, and manners of its enthusiastic votaries. No religion, indeed, that had previously, or has since existed, was

so perfectly calculated to form and perpetuate a nation of ferocious warriors. Mahomet promised paradise to those who fell fighting against the enemies of his faith; but he did not exclude those of his followers who died of age or disease. But all the future happiness which the Gothic religion unfolded, was exclusively destined to those only who fell in the field of battle, or who, to escape the degradation of servitude or of a peaceable exit, rushed upon death by suicide. To these the halls of Odin were ever open: on these were lavished all the pleasures and luxuries the most delightful to a Gothic imagination. But the pusillanimous, and those who died of disease and old age, were, by the laws and religion of Scandinavia, held contemptible and infamous in this world, and condemned in another life to severe and perpetual punishment, plunged into more than midnight gloom, surrounded by enormous piles of ice, in regions of eternal frost, for ever haunted by the apparitions of damned spirits, and tormented by loathsome serpents.* To avoid this horrible lot, death in battle, or suicide, was the only alternative

* Valerius Maximus speaking of the Cimbri, says, "*In acie exultabant tanquam gloriose et feliciter vita excessuri: lamentabantur morbo quasi turpiter et miserabiliter perituri.*" "In the field of battle they exulted in the prospect of a glorious and happy exit: in sickness they bemoaned their fate in perishing by an infamous and miserable death." Valer. Maxim. lib. 2. chap. 6.

military enthusiasm, and a decided contempt of danger and death, were the direct and natural consequences of this terrific and martial creed.

“Hence the love of combat flows,
Hence the warriors throbbing breast,
Bright his kindling courage glows,
Fierce he shakes his frowning crest :
He grasps his sword, he burns with noble rage
To rush where thronging hosts and giant chiefs engage.”

Sterling's Poems, p. 152.

Such were the religious ideas of those ferocious beings, who, under the various denominations of Saxons, Danes, and Normans, swept the ocean with their predatory squadrons; and with their horrible invasions, struck more civilized nations of Europe with terror, by carrying devastation and carnage through all its maritime parts. The histories of England and France record their extensive repeated depredations, and exhibit a sad picture of their ferocious character. The famous Lodbroke's Quida, or death song of Ragnar Lodbrog, shews the perfect correspondence of their military and moral ideas and sentiments, with their horrific mythology. That remarkable poem, which is thought to have been composed by Aslanga, the wife of Lodbrog, every incident is triumphantly depicted with the imagery of death; and the appalling circumstances of human slaughter are recollected with exultation. It seems, as

an elegant writer observes, to be "dictated by the demon of slaughter, and may be esteemed a genuine emanation from the deity of Valhalla."* This poem, which unfolds images that shock humanity, and display the extreme barbarity of the northern nations so late as the ninth century, presents to the contemplation of the philosopher, one of the most horrible states of society in which any portion of mankind has ever lived.

In comparing the Greeks and the Romans with the ferocious inhabitants of the northern regions, we find the same difference in the national characters as in their religious ideas. The Greek and Roman mythologies possess all that magnificent painting, and that mysterious sublimity which powerfully strikes the imagination; but they had no imagery so wild and terrific, so calculated to inspire the love of war, slaughter, and sanguinary cruelty, that which was displayed in the religion of Scandinavia. The consequence was, that the Greeks and Romans delighted in mental improvement, and cultivated the arts of refinement amidst the bustle of wars and the exultations of triumph, while the northern nations could be pleased only with scenes of carnage and devastation.

* Drake's Literary Hours, vol. 3. p. 317.

There has never existed a people on whose national character and circumstances religion has had a more conspicuous influence, than it had on the Arabians in the time of Mahomed, and under the caliphs his immediate successors. The state of religion in Arabia, at the time when the prophet made his appearance, was peculiarly favourable to his views. The greater part of the people were attached to the Sabean idolatry, or the worship of the celestial bodies. Judaism was also in part the religion of the country, and had been adopted by one of the Arabian kings, as well as by many of his subjects, long before the destruction of Jerusalem. After that disastrous event, numbers of jews had taken refuge in Arabia; and several independent tribes professed the Mosaical religion. The persecution of several sects of christians by the Greek emperors, had driven many of their followers into Arabia, where they found a secure asylum.* And the commerce and connexion of that country with Persia and India had introduced the opinions of the Manichees and Magi, as well as the doctrine of the Metempsychosis, with several other tenets of Brammical origin.† The Arabians, therefore, were a mixture of christians, jews,

* Ockley's History of the Saracens, vol. 1. p. 193.

† Maurice's Anct. Hist. Hindostan, vol. 2. p. 308.

and idolators of every sect and description and the design of Mahomed was to unite them in one system of religion.* Imitating the conduct of the ancient legislators, who made the current opinions of the people the basis of their religious institutions, he found, among such a variety of creeds, ample materials for his new system. His principal tenet was the unity of the divine essence. But he borrowed largely from the jews, the christians, and the magi, in order to reconcile the different tribes of Arabia to the acknowledgment of his mission, and the profession of his faith.†

The Mahomedan system, while in its full vigour, afforded a remarkable instance of the effects which the sincere belief of one or two dogmas of faith may produce. The great motive by which the vivid fancy and intrepid spirit of the Arabians were stimulated to enterprise when they had embraced the Islam was the promise of eternal life and inexhaustible pleasures to those who should fall in the wars against infidels. The force of enthusiasm thus roused, was still further stimulated, and completely confirmed by the doctrine of absolute predestination, involving and determining the most minute particulars in the life

* Sale's Koran Prelim. Disc. p. 47.

† Mahomed, in his description of paradise, borrowed largely from the magians. Hydes' Relig. Vet. Pers. chap. 33.

and death of every individual. The followers of the prophet were, therefore, encouraged to fight without fear for the propagation of the faith, since they were taught that, besides the merit of this service and its eternal reward, no action could avert their inevitable destiny, nor prolong for a moment their lives.

If it be asked why these doctrines did not continue to excite the same dauntless courage and the same ardent spirit of enterprise in after times, as in the first ages of the caliphate, and why they have now almost wholly lost their efficacy, the answer is easy, as the reason is obvious. Enthusiasm, however ardent it may be, or by whatever means it may be excited, seldom burns long with a steady and undiminished flame. Of this, history furnishes innumerable instances. Every new religion is adopted with a fervid zeal by its first votaries : it is then a matter of conviction : it is uppermost in their thoughts : it occupies the principal place in their minds, and forcibly commands their attention. In process of time, being transmitted to successive generations, it becomes a thing of custom and course. It is no longer embraced with the same ardour, nor confessed with the same zeal : its impressions on the mind grow more feeble : its precepts have less influence on practice ; and amidst the novelty of rising events and changing cir-

cumstances incessantly attracting human attention, the fervour which it at first inspired is gradually abated. It would, perhaps, be difficult to find among modern christians that indefatigable zeal, that dauntless perseverance and that inflexible constancy, under the severest trials by which they were distinguished in the apostolic age, and in the second and third centuries.

The system of religion and government which Mahomed framed and established, was more calculated for exciting a thirst of conquest than for giving stability to empire. Although the koran is the civil as well as the religious code of all the Mahomedan nations, it conveys no just or clear notion either of the relative duties of mankind in society, of the formation of the body politic, or of the principles of government.* The first caliphs reigned under the supposed sanction of divine authority, as the legal successors of the prophet, and were considered by their subjects as the viceregerents of the deity. But in process of time the caliphate, being rent asunder by the successful revolts of various pretenders to empire, was split into different and hostile monarchies. The followers of the prophet were also divided into various sects ; and amidst the contentions

* Volney's Syria, vol. 2, p. 394.

opposite factions, the venerable name of Mahomed lost much of its accustomed respect, and his religion much of its former influence.* The different nations professing the Islam being as often called out to war against one another as against infidels, the promise of paradise, to those who fell fighting for the faith, lost its effect, and the enthusiastic courage of the first mussulmans, gradually declined. Attempts have repeatedly been made to revive it in their wars with the Christians, but without any permanent effect. The primitive impulse had owed its force, in great measure, to the novelty of the circumstances by which it was created, and could not be revived in a degraded and antiquated system.

The effects of religion on the human mind and character, are conspicuously displayed throughout the extensive region of India. The deject state of the Hindoos, their weakness and pusillanimity, have already been noticed; and the supposition of its being the natural effect of the climate, has been sufficiently confuted, by the examples of other nations situated in the same latitudes. That the Hindoos have not always been in this degra-

* For the hatred which constantly exists between the Turks and the Christians, see Chardin, fol. 337, and for its origin, Ockley's History of Saracens, vol. 2. p. 73.

ded state, is evident from the magnificent and stupendous remains of ancient art yet visible in various parts of their country ; and, therefore, moral, rather than physical causes, must have produced so fatal a change in their national character. The conquest of the greater part of India by Mahomedan invaders, overturned the political system and most of the ancient governments of that celebrated country ; but the bloody and devastating wars, carried on with little intermission for the space of more than six centuries, would rather seem calculated to render the Hindoos a warlike than a pusillanimous people. One great and powerful cause, however, seems always to have operated in India to the exaltation of the privileged classes and the degradation of the people. Their religion, with which the government is so intimately united as to form only one system, has a constant tendency to depress the genius as well as the courage of the Hindoos, to prevent every kind of emulation, and to extinguish the spirit of enterprise. Accustomed and taught to look on their priests as men of a more exalted origin, and on themselves as the lowest order of beings in the scale of human existence, the inferior classes of the numerous population of India are debarred by irrevocable laws, from passing the limits within which they are confined by superstition.

and despotism. Amidst all the foreign invasions and intestine commotions which have convulsed their country for so many centuries, the Bramins have laboured unremittingly, and with too great success, to keep up this al delusion.

Amongst the Hindoos, the whole of moral conduct and mental operation is directed and regulated by the Braminical theology. The nature, the form, and the efficiency of their government, originate in and entirely depend on religion, which is the basis of the whole system of Hindoo society. Their political, civil, and criminal code, is interwoven with their theology, and equally considered as derived from divine authority. "The affairs of government, of judicature, and police, down to the most minute forms of social and domestic intercourse, are all identified with their religious observances: the whole is sacred and inviolable; and the ideas attached to improvement and profanation, can scarcely be distinguished from one another."* A religion which blends itself with the minutest concerns of life, must have a powerful influence on the minds of its votaries; but it is naturally inimical to the developement of talents and the cultivation of genius. In prescribing the daily and hourly duties of the citizen, it is well

* Col. Wilkes' Historical Sketches of India, vol. 1. p. 74.

calculated to form a peculiar and separate people different from all others; but such a nation, when once formed, remains for ever incapable of improvement.

✓ Religion is often mutilated by time, veiled by mystery, debased by superstition, and variously corrupted in passing through the hands of men. The religion of the Hindoos and the ancient Persians sprung, in all probability, from the same source, and was originally pure theism, transmitted from Shem, Elam and their other patriarchal ancestors; but was gradually corrupted by the Magi of Persia and the Bramins of India *. The theology of the magi, however, was reformed by the second Zoroaster, and was never so degraded as that of the Bramins, which has degenerated into a system of tyranny, as well as of the grossest idolatry; although it originally inculcated just and sublime notions of the essence of the deity.†

The institutes of Menu, whom the Hindoos regard as their primeval lawgiver and patriarch, exhibit a system of despotism and priestcraft both limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support though w

* Hyde Relig. Vet. Pers. chap. 23. Cudworth's Intell. Syst. 1. chap. 4. Prideaux Connect. vol. 1. chap. 4.

† Strabo lib. 15. Sir W. Jones' Works, vol. 4. p. 415—Maurice's Ancient History of Hindostan, vol. 1. p. 52.

tuál checks.* This code is acknowledged by the sects both of Brama and Budh as the foundation of Hindoo jurisprudence.† But in the Birman empire the power of religion is checked by the government, while in India it operates without control. This may, perhaps, be the principal cause of the striking difference of character between the Birmans and the Hindoos, although situated so near to each other, and even under the same parallels of latitude.

The Hindoo religion is now become one of the most degrading systems existing in the world. "The influence of priestcraft over superstition," says Mr. Orme, "is no where so visible as in India. All the concerns of life have a strict analogy and connexion with the ceremonies of religion; and the Bramins have promulgated such a variety of strange persuasions, that the Hindoo finds himself every hour under the necessity of consulting his spiritual guide. The building of a pagoda, and maintaining within it a set of priests, is believed to be the greatest action of which human nature is capable. Every offence may be expiated by largeesses to Bramins prescribed by themselves according to their own measures of avarice and sen-

Lord Teignmouth's life of Sir W. Jones, vol. 2. p. 263.
Symes embassy to Ava, p. 13.

suality.”* But in the whole system of the tyrannical superstition, nothing could be contrived more effectually to degrade a large portion of the Hindoo population than that absurd and cruel superstition, which debars the wretched sooder from receiving instruction and confirms his inferiority to the other cast in a physical as well as a moral sense both in the present and future life.†

To exhibit in circumstantial detail the complicated and absurd system of the Bramini religion, would be uninteresting as well as un-instructive.‡ One important circumstance however, cannot be overlooked, as it seems to contribute more than any other to fix the state of society amongst the Hindoos, and to form their national character. Every one knows that from time immemorial, the whole mass of the Hindoo population has been divided into four great casts or classes. Of these the principal is, that of the Bramins or priests, who not only possess the most exalted rank but pretend to a superior origin, and are revered with the ma-

* Orme's Historical Fragments of the Mogul Emp. General I of the Government of Hindost. ch. 6.

† Dr. Buchanan, p. 111.

‡ For a particular account of the Hindoo religion, see Sir Jone's works. Maurice's Anct. Hist. Hindostan, and Mod. Hindost. Tavernier's Trav. Dow's Hindost. Orme's Hist. Fragments. Halhed's Gentoo Code. Sonnerat's voyage aux Indes. Wilke's Historical Sketches, &c.

superstitious veneration. The second is the Koor or Chittri tribe, who, according to their institutions, are military men, although some of them engage in other occupations. The third is the tribe of Beise, which consists of merchants, bankers, shopkeepers, and others concerned in trade; and the fourth is that of the Sooder, who are employed in manual labour, and debarred by irrevocable laws from rising to any superior rank. If any one be excommunicated from any of these casts he cannot be received into another, but is forever excluded from society, and abhorred by every man in the nation. This circumstance renders religion all-powerful, and excommunication so dreadful, that almost any Hindoo will suffer death rather than deviate from one article of his faith,—a circumstance which renders their conversion to christianity exceedingly difficult.

The four grand divisions of the Hindoos are further subdivided into a number of other casts or classes, of which the distinctions and order of pre-eminence are decidedly fixed by religious law. The members of each cast invariably adhere to the profession of their ancestors, and which every deviation would be impious and profane; and from generation to generation the same families or casts follow the same mode of life. The division of the people into

casts or tribes prevailed in ancient Egypt, and has been greatly applauded by several writers both ancient and modern, as conducive to the perfection of the arts by adding successively the attainments of the son to those of the father, and for being calculated to curb aspiring ambition, by confining every one to his own profession, whatever might be the strength of his intellect or the extent of his talents. "But," as an eminent writer observes, "the benefits resulting from the experience of ancestry would be more than balanced by the disadvantages connected with it, in dooming many to professions which they had neither inclination to prosecute nor ability to improve. And although the institution of hereditary employments might in bridling ambition serve the purpose of an usurping priesthood, by compressing the spirit of the people, it must at the same time have depressed genius, by imposing a restraint upon its versatility, and extinguished the ardour of emulation, without which the liberal arts can never attain superior excellence. These can only be cultivated with success among a people in a state of professional freedom, where genius is left unfettered, and talents have their full range; and where a possibility is left to men of all classes of rising to public honours and offices."* T

* Russell's Hist. Anct. Europe, vol. 1, p. 113, 114.

system of hereditary profession may undoubtedly contribute to that dexterity of hand for which the Hindoos are so distinguished, and of which so remarkable instances are seen in the exquisite workmanship of their curious manufactures; but it entirely checks the spirit of invention and confines them to the dull routine of imitation.

These regulations appear to have produced the same effects both in Egypt and India. The ancient Egyptians, like the modern Hindoos, were the slaves of their priests, who exercised, in the name and under the sanction of the gods, a despotic authority over men. Mr. Russell has accurately delineated their intellectual character, and if we compare it with that of the Hindoos, the picture will exhibit a striking resemblance. "The genius of the Egyptians," says this excellent writer, "was acute and steady, rather than liberal or elevated. They prosecuted works of expence and ingenuity with singular perseverance, and upon principles purely mathematical; but they were totally destitute of taste; and never required a distinguished rank among the cultivators of the fine arts. Their architecture attempted to supply greatness of design by immensity of fabric, substituting altitude for sublimity, and ponderous solidity for stability. Their statuary, like their architecture, de-

lighted in huge masses of stone, nicely chiselled but displaying neither elegance of figure, animation of expression, nor grace in attitude. Their painting, if we except brilliancy and durability of colouring, was devoid of every excellency belonging to that captivating art. They were totally ignorant of the magical effects of light and shade,* &c.* In this masterly delineation, we cannot but recognize the Hindoo as well as the Egyptian genius, and if the stupendous remains of antiquity seen at Elora and in the island of Elephanta as well as the modern pagodas of Chittambur and Seringham be compared with the ruins of Thebes, the sphinx, and other celebrated monuments of ancient Egypt, the resemblance between the ideas of the two nations, in regard to the arts, will not appear the less striking. The division of a whole nation into casts or classes with the institution of hereditary professions, if rigidly adhered to, must, wherever it takes place, produce similar effects.† In regard to the social system, it establishes a regular series of strict subordination, and

* Russell's Hist. Anc. Europe, vol. 1. p. 417. Dr. Russell here refers to Diod. Sicul. lib. 1. and to Winkelman Hist. de l'Art de l'Antiquité, liv. 2. chap. 1. and 3.

† The Birmans, whose character, is delineated by M. Symes, hold the same religious doctrines as the Hindoos, but are not like them divided into casts, and from this circumstance the difference between them seems to proceed, as the climate, &c. is the same.

ders the inferior orders of the people submissive to slavery as to the ordinance of heaven: respect of the arts, it may produce dexterity workmanship, but nothing can be more inimical to invention and taste.

Dulness in design, and accuracy in execution, seem to characterize the genius of all the oriental nations. Of this, despotism is the cause. The Chinese, as well as the Hindoos, possess, in an eminent degree, the talent of imitation, but appear to have no genius for invention. In China, however, religion has no legal establishment, nor scarcely any influence on society. But in China the despotism of the government produces nearly the same effects as those which proceed from the despotism of religion in India: the great object of both is to exact a passive submission, which cannot fail of degrading the character and destroying the mental energies of the people. The despotism of the Chinese government, however, appears to be far less hostile to intellectual exertion, than that of the Braminical religion in India. The elements of literature are almost universally diffused among the Chinese. They have an infinite number of publications, on all subjects not connected with the government—particularly in poetry, and the other departments of the “*Belles Lettres*.” Every considerable city in China contains several

booksellers shops ; and Sir George Staunton in enumerating the advantages which that empire possesses, mentions the intelligence of the lower classes of the people.* But the small portion of learning that exists among the Hindoos, is almost entirely confined to the priesthood. Sir George Staunton has given us a fine specimen of the official stile of the court of Peking, in the valedictory address to the late emperor Kien Long, on resigning the sceptre to his son.† The speech of the monarch is replete with good sense, and appropriate to the occasion : it displays the highest degree of paternal affection towards his subjects, and breathes a tone of piety and of perfect resignation to the divine will. But Mr. Pinkerton speaking of the compositions of the Hindoos observes, that “ Although translations of some of their best works have appeared, they have not acquired the smallest degree of European reputation, and have very little interested few curious inquirers, though eager to be pleased. To compare such tedious trifles alike destitute of good sense, vigorous genius or brilliant fancy, with the immortal genius of Greece or Rome, would only confirm the idea that the climate itself impairs judgment, which

* Sir Geo. Staunton's Translation of the Ya Tsing Leu Lee, or Laws of China, pref. p. 11.

† Sir Geo. Staunton's Translation appendix p. 482.

inflames the imagination.* But might it rather be said, that the baleful influence of the religious and political institutions of India, pervading the whole system of society, has blasted the blossoms of genius in that country, and reduced the human mind to a state of senile decrepitude. In regard to the improvement of intellect, the Chinese have very great advantages over the Hindoos. There are no privileged classes in China: employment under the government is the only source of distinction: the way to public offices is open to all; and learning is the sole recommendation to preferment. But among the Hindoos, the place which every individual must occupy in society, is fixed by irrevocable laws, claiming for their origin and establishment the sanction of divine authority. In China, the cultivation of letters meets with encouragement; and emulation is excited. In India, the progress of intellect is checked, the diffusion of learning prevented, and all emulation necessarily extinguished. In the northern parts of India, where repeated invasions and almost incessant commotions have so often roused the natives to arms, the power of religion is greatly weakened, and the different casts, although seldom confounded

* Pinkerton's Mod. Geog. p. 258.

by matrimonial intermixture; no longer confine themselves to their appropriate occupations. Bramins are frequently soldiers: many of them eat flesh, which is positively prohibited by their religion; and they always carry offensive weapons. Even the merchants and the mechanics, when they travel only a few miles, are all strongly armed, and in some of the northern provinces, particularly in Bundelkund, the husbandmen carry their spears with them into the field.* The character of these northern Hindoos is also very different from that of the mild and passive inhabitants of the lower Carnatic, the Panjab, and some of the neighbouring provinces, even those of the domestic and unwarlike professions are brave, daring, and frequently cruel. The Mahrattas are a warlike people, and the founder of their states, the famous Sevagee, was a hero whose name would not disgrace the annals of Greece or Rome. The Seiks, who inhabit the north-western provinces, are already become formidable, and rather want discipline than courage to render them equal to European troops. But the religion of the Seiks appears to differ considerably from that of the other nations of India; and even among the Mahrattas the power of the Bramins is greatly diminished. Mr. Orme ascribes the difference between the

* Chatfield's Hindostan, p. 165. Forster's Travels, vol. 1. p. 12.

thern and southern Hindoos to the influence of climate, but it rather appears to arise, as Mr. Chatfield observes, from continual wars and civil commotions.* These political convulsions have weakened the power of the sacerdotal system, and rendered the people more independent and enterprising.

Superstition, when skilfully managed by patriotic politicians, may serve to excite and elevate the mind instead of depressing the spirits and inspiring pusillanimity. To this end it was adopted by the legislators of Greece and Rome, by the chiefs of Scandinavia, and by the Arabian prophet. But the usurping priests of India seem to have had no other object in view than to keep the people in a state of passive submission. Had not this been the case, a religion which can impel its infatuated votaries to throw themselves under the chariot wheels of the idol of Juggernaut, and inspire delicate females with an intrepidity that enables them to meet the most terrible death without fear, voluntarily burning themselves on the funerals of their deceased consorts, might have made a powerful engine for rousing the rage of the Hindoos against foreign invaders, and preserving the independence of their

Mr. Chatfield's Historical Fragments, b. 11. chap. 9. Chatfield's Hindoos, p. 165.

country.* The resistance met with by Alexander the Great in his invasion of India, and his inability to penetrate beyond the limits of the Panjab, are a proof that the natives were not at that time an unwarlike and pusillanimous people.† And it is easy to conceive that if the Bramins in later times had applied their religion to patriotic purposes, and made use of their influence to promote union among the Hindoo princes, the vast population of India might, with a very moderate degree of military discipline, have bid defiance to all invaders.

After exhibiting the origin, and considering the effects of false systems of religion, it is necessary to examine the influence of the doctrines of eternal truth on the human character and on human happiness. An ample field here lies open to our survey; and presents a contrast most striking and impressive. The Mosaical law, although only a temporary institution preparatory to a more perfect dispensation, casts all the various systems of paganism far into the shade when placed

* For the festival of Juggernaut, the voluntary sacrifice of a pilgrim crushed to death under the wheels of the idol's chariot, the shout of approbation of the people, and the prodigious number of worshippers, see Dr. Buchanan's *Christian Researches in India*, p. 136—141. In an account taken in 1803, the number of women who burned themselves at the funerals of their husbands, were 275, within thirty miles of Calcutta.

† Plutarch *Vita Alexandri*.—Arrian *Exped. Alexandri*.—Major Rennell's *Memoir*, &c.

scale of comparison. It inculcated just ideas of the essence and attributes of the Supreme Being, impressed on the mind a continual sense of his superintending providence, and communicated the knowledge of his will regard to moral conduct. Instead of deluding the minds of the people by oracles and prophecies, and by a confused assemblage of fables, the offspring of ignorance and superstition, of fiction and fraud, it taught them to look up in every circumstance of life to the Author of their existence, the omnipotent and omniscient ruler of the universe, of whose favourable regard they were assured so long as their actions were conformable to his laws.

A line of moral distinction, both in speculation and practice, was drawn between the Jews and the heathens; and whoever will take the trouble to examine and compare the writings of the Hebrews with those of the most enlightened philosophers among the Greeks and Romans, whom education and habit have taught us to regard as the luminaries of the ancient world, will readily perceive the different effects which their respective systems were calculated to produce on the human mind, and consequently on the conduct of men in society.

It has been already observed that the primeval legislators of Egypt and Crete, of Greece and

Rome, established their religious systems under the pretended sanction of some ideal or allegorical deity, whose power, at the best, was limited to a particular department of the world and its government, whose authority was undefined and uncertain, and whose very person and essence were confounded in the wild chaos of pagan mythology. Moses was the only legislator of antiquity who promulgated a national religion in the commanding and awful name of the one supreme and eternal being, the creator and governor of the universe, whose omnipresence pervades the whole system of nature, and whose providence, inspecting the whole train of causes and effects in the moral as well as the physical world, foresees, directs, and controls all events.

The purity of the Mosaical religion corresponded with the grandeur of its origin. The divinities of Greece were slaves to the same passions as their votaries, and most of them were stained with crimes. The gods of all the pagan nations delighted in scenes of human slaughter; and sometimes their wrath could be appeased only by human sacrifices. The more mild and benevolent of their deities were pleased with impure rites and bacchanalian festivals. But the Jehovah, whose worship was proposed to the Hebrews, is invariably represented as a being not less holy than powerful.

e perpetual enemy of vice, and the constant end of virtue. The solemn rites by which was honoured were of the purest kind : the ceremonies and injunctions which appear only minutiae, and in a superficial view might be deemed unimportant, were calculated to promote either the health and comfort of individuals, or the good order and peace of society. One of the greatest advantages of the Hebrew religion over every system of paganism, was the peculiar excellency of its precepts, and the means of acquiring moral and religious instruction, which it afforded to every class of people. The pagans never appointed instructors to deliver moral precepts in the name of the gods.* The people frequented the temples and attended the solemn rites of religion as well as other public shews ; but they did not receive any moral or religious instructions from their priests, who never considered it as any part of their duty to enlighten the minds of the multitude. Among the Israelites the case was totally different. The scriptures were read and explained in the synagogues every sabbath day, and thus became intelligible to the meanest capacity. The same laudable custom being adopted by the christians, has produced a moral and religious illumination in a great part of the world.

* Vide St. August. De Civit. Dei, lib. 2, cap. 53.

The principal objection that can be made against the religion of Moses is that it does not promulgate the doctrine of a future state, where the good shall be rewarded; and the wicked shall be punished. This seeming defect has not been overlooked by infidels. The Greeks and the Romans, say they, had their Elysium, and their Tartarus: the ferocious Scandinavians had their Valhalla and the Nistheim; and most of the pagan nations, whose creeds history has left any memorial, believed that in another life happiness and misery should be impartially dispensed to the souls of the departed according to the merit or demerit of their actions in the present state of existence. But the Hebrew legislator endeavouring to impress, in a forcible manner, his system of religion and law on the minds of his people, by exciting their hopes and their fears, confines all his promises and threats to the things of this life without directing their view to any object beyond the grave.

To assign a satisfactory reason for the omission of a doctrine which is calculated to operate as the strongest incitement to virtue and the most powerful check to vice, is a task which the powers of the human understanding are wholly inadequate. The learned Dr. W. Burton has displayed both genius and erudition in the investigation of this important a

difficult subject ; but some of his arguments, however ingenious, are far from being satisfactory to an inquiring mind.* If we should hazard an opinion on so difficult a point, it seems the most probable that the Mosaical system, being entirely a national system, and political as well as religious, the doctrine of a future state was left out because its rewards and punishments could be inflicted only on individuals, while temporal happiness and misery exhibited in awful contrast, were proposed to the consideration of the Israelites, as these alone could affect the community.† But whether this hypothesis be well or ill founded, it is certain that the clear revelation of a future state was reserved for the coming of Christ, and the establishment of a more perfect religion. The first glimmering of light remote objects were involved in obscurity ; but when the angelical sun rose above the horizon, the prospect was enlarged, and eternity laid open to the intellectual view.

The Mosaical system being only a preparation to a more extended revelation of the divine will, was superseded by christianity, which, overthrowing paganism with all its crowd of fabulous divinities, effected the most important

* Vide Divine Legation of Moses, passim,

† Vide Deuteronomy, chap. 28.

revolution in human ideas as well as moral that ever took place since man was created.

The religion of the Hebrews was designed for a particular period of time and for a peculiar nation, and not for all ages nor for the whole human race. Several of its rites and injunctions were not calculated for every situation and climate: it is therefore sufficiently evident that its extension was to be limited and its existence temporary.* Christianity is a system of a totally different nature: it is suited to every country, to every age and climate, and capable of being adapted to the variety of human circumstances. This, indeed, is one of its distinguishing excellences, and shews that it is calculated for universal diffusion and perpetual duration.

Such a religion was absolutely necessary to mankind. During a long succession of ages all the nations of the earth, with the single exception of the jews, had, in regard to religious matters, been left to grope their way under a canopy of fuliginous darkness. “Even the most enlightened nations the clouds of superstition hung dark, awful, and portentous over them.”

* All persons of the male sex were enjoined to appear at Jerusalem three times in the year; Exod. chapter 23, v. 14, 17. Deuteronomy, chapter 16, v. 16. And the kindling of fire on the sabbath was strictly prohibited. Exod. chap. 35, v. 3. These were injunctions with which it would have been next to impossible to comply in very remote countries and in extremely cold climates.

their religion, which sprung from fear, carried through all its streams the bitterness of its fountain. Their divinities were capricious, selfish, and revengeful, and the fears of the worshiper often appeared in the cruel rites which he employed to appease them, and in the numberless occurrences which revealed to him the intimations of their displeasure. A dream, an omen, any unusual event excited his alarm: the general darkness which surrounded him converted his alarms into settled terror; and his inability to determine which of the divinities he had offended, in what his offence consisted, and by what means it was to be propitiated, often raised his terror to distraction and despair."* It must be acknowledged that the fears which Mr. Finlayson here describes, as besetting the votaries of paganism, were not very conspicuous in the conduct of the Greek and Roman legislators and rulers, who regarded their religion as an instrument for governing the people, nor in that of their popular assemblies and their armies, whose apprehensions, although easily excited, were readily allayed by the skilful management of their magistrates and commanders. But few materials are left of the private life and domestic affairs of the pagans; and the ideas and

* Finlayson's Sermons, p 39.

feelings of multitudes, acting in masses, are very different from those of solitary individuals. at a distance from the bustling scenes of life, and unengaged in those active concerns which so often engross the whole thought and attention of man. In such situations superstition has always the most powerful influence; and although the philosophers and magistrates of Greece and Rome attached no credit to the absurd tales of their fictitious mythology, the case was very different with the vulgar, and even with the higher classes in nations less enlightened. History informs us, that kings and military commanders often sacrificed their favourites, their relatives, and sometimes even their own children on the altars of their gods, in order to appease the supposed anger, and to avert their dreaded vengeance.

In the view of delivering mankind from the slavish fear of cruel, capricious, and vindictive divinities, Epicurus devised a system of philosophical atheism. But the cure was, in some respects, worse than the disease, as extinguishing the dread of superior beings, left the inordinate passions of men without any religious restraint, and opened the flood-gates to every kind of vice and licentiousness. Nothing could effectually dispel this intellectual darkness, and remove these moral evils.

at just conceptions of the nature and attributes of God ; and this knowledge could be acquired only through the medium of a divine revelation. Dense clouds rest upon the hallowed and inaccessible habitation of the deity ; but through the agency of christianity, beams of glory, darting from his eternal throne, shine around on every side, and give to the human mind an illumination which it could never have attained by its own powers.

The christian revelation supplied the defects of the Mosaical system, and exploded the errors of paganism. Its doctrines and precepts are calculated to enlighten the minds and regulate the actions of men. Besides indicating just ideas of the essence and attributes of the supreme being, it established the important doctrine of a future state, of rewards and punishments, concerning which the Mosai- cal law had been silent, which had been gradually insinuated by the Hebrew prophets, and of which the pagan philosophers had formed only vague and confused notions. At the time when Christ appeared in the world, this doctrine was regarded, not only by the gentiles but even by the jews, as a philosophical opinion, rather than an article of faith : the latter did not consider it as an essential part of their law ; and it was rejected by many of the greatest and most learned men in the

nation.* The question, however, was of the utmost importance to mankind, and, in it every individual, from the highest to the lowest, was personally and deeply interested. On the fate that awaits him beyond the grave, interesting conjectures and awful reflections will force themselves on the mind of every rational being. The bustle of active life, the busy throng of men, the pomp and splendour of courts, the parade and dangers of war, the pursuits of ambition or pleasure, and all those illusory scenes that bewilder the eye and the imagination, may give a temporary check to thoughts of this nature; but in the hour of solitude and silence, the mind cannot wholly withdraw its attention from the still small voice that whispers, "The fashion of this world passeth away." A vague and confused idea of a world to come, and of a life more durable than the present, was, therefore, prevalent in every nation, whether barbarous or civilized, although it could not be said to arise to a steady belief. Amidst a variety of conjectures and jarring opinions, the human mind was left in a state of uncertainty and doubt: man totally ignorant of the design of

* The doctrine of a future state, although held by the Pharisees, was rejected by the Sadducees: the latter, however, were never excluded from the Jewish communion. Several of the Jewish princes, and even some of the high priests were Sadducees.

creation and of his ultimate destiny, was, himself, an inexplicable enigma; and in meditating on the shortness of life, with its numerous troubles and difficulties, he could discover no satisfactory reason for his being brought into existence. The light of the gospel dispelled the mist that darkened the human intellect: it first discovered to man the aim and end of his creation: it removed the mysterious veil which had concealed his eternal destiny; and it developed this important truth, that the whole history of the world was only a single page in the mysterious volume of divine providence. Christianity was the celestial telescope that opened to human view the magnificent prospect of eternity.

The morality taught by the gospel, is as necessary to the happiness of man as air is to existence. It enjoins the practice of every virtue that can promote human felicity, and prohibits all those vices that disturb the peace of society. Such a religion could not fail of being productive of the most beneficial effects. Abolished human sacrifices, which continued to be offered in many countries at the time of its promulgation: infanticide, a crime that was tolerated even among the polished nations of Greece and Rome, disappeared under its benevolent influence.* It checked the prac-

*The practice of murdering or exposing infants, continued among the Romans till after the establishment of christianity. Codex Theodos.

tice of private war, the bane of the middle ages.* It rendered wars between different nations less cruel and sanguinary, and procured a milder treatment to the vanquished and prisoners. It restrained the vices of kings and the turbulence of subjects, and diminished the frequency of rebellions, assassinations of princes, and revolutions of states. It enjoined and encouraged hospitality to strangers, and preserved the shipwrecked from plunderers.†

Christianity displayed its beneficent effects in the relief of human distress of every description. To its prevalence, Europe is indebted for its hospitals and other charitable institutions. In Athens and other Greek republics, the state provided for the children of soldiers slain in battle.‡ But neither the Greeks nor the Romans had any public hospitals, till the humane spirit of the gospel gave rise to these establishments. A learned

lib. 10. In the days of Tacitus it was so common, that he thought it extraordinary that the Germans did not kill any of their children. Tacit de Morib. German. chap. 19. Pliny attempts an apology for infanticide, lib. 29.

* Vide Du Cange Voce Treuga Dei.—Bonquet Recueil des Historiques tom. 10. p. 49—147.

† In ancient times, the sovereigns of countries and lords of lands, and maritime provinces, used to seize the goods of vessels that were wrecked on their coasts, and, in many instances, even the men were made slaves. The practice appears to have been universal in the time of the Antonines and even long afterwards: it was vigorously combated, and at length abolished by the prevalence of christianity. Vide Hoffman Vo. Naufragium, and Lex Rhodia. Du Cange Voce Lagan. Ejectus, &c.

‡ Aristotle's Polit. lib. 2. chap 8.

and excellent writer says, "It does not appear that there was any establishment in pagan times for the reception of the poor or sick, the widow or the orphan, the foundling or the maimed prostitute, whereas in the seventeenth century, there were twenty-five magnificent houses in Rome for these and other charitable purposes."* London, Madrid, Petersburg, Moscow, and other large cities of Europe, abound in such humane institutions; and it would be both difficult and tedious to enumerate all the charitable establishments that are to be seen in England, Italy, Spain, and, indeed, in every christian country.

But there is no circumstance in the history of human society, in which the benign influence of christianity has been more conspicuous than in the abolition of slavery, which existed in so dreadful an extent among the Greeks and Romans, and all the other nations of the heathen world. The christian religion, by teaching that all men are originally equal, and that all must appear before the same tribunal, before a judge whose omnipotence no power can withstand, whose integrity no bribes can bribe, and in whose presence all worldly distinctions must disappear, was pre-eminently favourable to liberty. Its imme-

diat effects were a more humane treatment of slaves; and it ultimately contributed more than any other cause to the abolition of the system of slavery. When Pope Gregory the Great, towards the end of the sixth century, liberated his own slaves, he recommended the same conduct to others, by declaring, that “As our Redeemer the Creator and Lord of all was graciously pleased to take human flesh that by his divine favour he might set us free from the bondage (of sin) by which we were held captives, and restore us to our primitive liberty, so also ought we to restore to freedom those men whom nature made free, but whom the laws of nations have subjected to slavery. During the middle ages, it was common to emancipate slaves “for the love of God,” “for the remission of sins,” &c. A volume, indeed, would scarcely suffice for the enumeration of the instances of manumission on the principle of religion, nor of the various laws enacted by christian sovereigns, for the purpose of mitigating the rigours of slavery, and preparing the way to its abolition.† In recent times

* “Cum Redemptor noster, totius Conditor naturæ, ad hoc profectus, humanam carnem voluerit assumere ut Divinitatis suæ gloriæ dirempto (quo tenebamur captivi) vinculo, pristinæ nos libertati, restitueret salubriter agitur si homines, quos ab initio, liberos natura profectus, and jus Gentium iugo substituit servitutis, in ea quæ nati fuerant manumittentis beneficio libertati reddantur.” Potgiess, lib. 4. chap. 1.

† Du Cange Voce Manumissio Muratori Antiq. Ital. vol. 1. p. 849,

influence of avarice, in conjunction with
 orance or neglect of the doctrines and pre-
 ts of christianity, revived slavery in
 erica, after it had been abolished in Europe.
 a more enlightened attention to the dic-
 es of the gospel, induced several European
 vers, as well as the United States of America,
 abolish the slave trade, which, for some
 turies, had been a disgrace to the christian
 e; and it can scarcely be doubted, that
 same cause will produce the same effect in
 e nations which still tolerate that infamous
 ic.*

ne of the most eminent writers of the last
 ury, the celebrated Dr. Paley, says that
 he influence of religion is not to be sought
 he councils of princes, in the resolutions
 opular assemblies, in the conduct of govern-
 ts towards their subjects, or of states and
 reign towards each other, of conquerors at
 head of their armies," &c.† This asser-
 however, only shews that the strongest
 erstanding may fall into great errors in
 y through inattention to facts. It is im-
 ble to peruse the ancient laws of the
 bards, the French, the Anglo Saxons, the

whoever peruses Clarkson's History of the Abolition of the Slave
 cannot but perceive that the influence of christianity was the
 al cause which produced that benign and happy effect.
 Paley's Evid. Christian. part 3, ch. 6.

Swedes, the Visgoths, and other nations, even in the darkest ages of christianity, without perceiving the influence of the gospel on the councils of those governments and princes by whom they were formed and enacted ; and the conduct of modern commanders equally shews that its voice is not wholly silenced by the noise and the tumult of war. All this indeed is natural. Christianity, wherever it is professed, must have either a direct or an indirect influence on all classes of men from the highest to the lowest. It establishes a train of moral ideas to which every one gives his assent, although often without either examining the propriety or considering their importance ; and those impressions which float unquestioned and undefined over the understanding, give colouring to the character, and a bias to the conduct of multitudes, who are scarcely aware of their existence. Christianity has a direct influence on real, and an indirect influence on mere nominal professors : the latter is even extended to those who are seldom seen in the place of worship ; for how destitute soever an individual may be of the spirit of religion, he finds it necessary to respect the notions and manners that are established in society. It is thus that christianity has so great a share in fashioning the public mind ; and even princes who understand the art of government, always

respect public opinion. The history of the world exhibits a series of incontrovertible evidence that christianity has moulded even despotic governments to humanity: that it has given rise to wise and equitable laws: that it has disarmed war of a great part of its terrors: that it has taught the great, the rich, and the powerful, to acknowledge that all men are brethren, and given to the poor a rank and consequence which they never possessed amidst the boasted freedom of Greece and Rome.

Christianity has been greatly conducive to the advancement of literature and science. It threw into circulation an immense number of new ideas, by which it enriched the intellectual world; and it has been particularly instrumental in preserving and disseminating moral and classical knowledge. It formed a numerous body of men whom it compelled by the nature of their profession and employment to cultivate their talents, to cherish regular habits of thought, and to study the most effectual method of elucidating the doctrines which they taught. Learning could not be entirely lost while there was an order of men to whom a moderate share of it, at least, was necessary to qualify them for the sacerdotal office, and entitle them to its emoluments. The propagation of christianity was every where accompanied by the introduction of letters among

nations to whom they were unknown, and the dissemination in countries where they were already in use. To christianity we are debted for the preservation of the classic works of antiquity, and consequently for that we know of the ancients. During the anarchy and barbarism which followed the subversion of the Roman empire, and continued for many centuries, the monasteries, which furnished comfortable retreats from war and tyranny, served also as inns for the accommodation of travellers, as repositories for books and as schools for the education of youth.

It has been objected against christianity, that by forbidding to return evil for evil, and inculcating the contempt of glory, it destroyed the greatest incentives to martial exploits. Rousseau considers the precepts of the gospel as inconsistent with liberty, valour, and patriotism. But that writer, who is remarkable for self contradiction, is confuted by his own words when he says that if all were perfect christians, soldiers would despise danger and death.† Gibbon also insinuates that the propagation of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel tended to the depression of courage, and remarks the aversion of the primitive christians

* Machiavel Disc. on Liv. b. 2. chap. 2.

† Rousseau's Social Contract, vol. 4. chap. 8.

to a political or a military life.* But the historian of the decline and fall of the empire was not ignorant that among the Romans the ceremonies of the pagan religion were intimately blended with all the concerns of war, as well as with those of the magistracy, and that it was difficult, and in some cases next to impossible, to exercise the functions of a magistrate, a senator, or a soldier, without being polluted by idolatry.† The genius of paganism, therefore, rather than that of christianity, was the principal cause of the reluctance of the early professors of the gospel to engage in political or military affairs.

The christian religion, although it forbids revenge and retaliation, does not prohibit self defence, nor the exercise of war for the purpose of repelling unjust aggression and maintaining national rights. And, in conformity to this view of the evangelical doctrines, we find that as soon as christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, its professors readily inlisted under the banners of the state.‡

* Gibbon, Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 2. chap. 15. p. 326. &c.

† Vide Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 2. chap. 15. p. 389.

‡ The expressions in the gospel which enjoin a passive submission to injuries and insults, ought to be understood as addressed to persons in a particular situation, and their meaning as capable of being modified according to circumstances. Neither the soldiers who consulted Christ, Luke, ch. 3. v. 14. nor the Centurian Cornelius, Acts, ch. 10. were reproached on account of their profession.

The gospel being designed for all nations, and calculated to promote universal peace and benevolence, could not with propriety enjoin patriotism and valour in the sense in which they were understood by the Greeks and the Romans; but it inculcates the contempt of danger and death, which is the basis of heroism and the most essential ingredient in the character of the warrior. A writer, who has diligently investigated the subject, says "It is of the utmost importance that the religious impressions made on the mind of the soldier should not be of a gloomy or dispiriting nature: they should be connected with hope, not with fear, or they will tend to make him cowardly instead of brave. Those who believe that they are secure of happiness, if to the bottom of their power they live and die doing their duty, will certainly meet danger, and, if necessary, death, with more courage than they could ever do who are oppressed and intimidated by superstitious doubts and horrors which degrade men, and which are inconsistent with all ideas of the goodness and beneficence of God. Christianity, rightly understood, is this religion which excites no superstitious horrors and of which the impressions are connected with the most animating hopes: by opening

* Edgworth on Professional Education, p. 143.

the most brilliant prospects beyond the grave, it tends to extinguish a pusillanimous regard for life, and renders the character of the true christian incompatible with that of the cowardly soldier. The truth of this theory is established by the incontrovertible evidence of facts. The armies of christendom have, in deeds of valour, rivalled those of Greece and Rome; and at this day, the christian nations of Europe are far superior to all the rest of the world in martial prowess and the art of war.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that christianity was an indirect cause of some effects which may appear of a pernicious or at least of a doubtful nature. The happy effect of the gospel in reforming the morals of its professors, at first, were every where conspicuous. But when it became perverted from its genuine simplicity, and to proselyte men, to particular opinions, instead of converting them from vice to virtue, was the principal object of its ministers, it began to lose much of its benign influence. Endless disputes and quarrels, concerning the different systems grafted on the gospel, filled christians with rancour and implacable animosities, which nearly annihilated the substance of christianity, while they contended only for shadows, and were perplexed by a variety of contradictory creeds, which bewildered the understanding

without contributing to the purity of mor

But whether these differences, in speculative points, were not more productive of good than of evil, is a problem of difficult solution. In morals as in physics the operations of deity are conducted on a large scale ; and it is our duty to adore his mysterious dispensations.* It is certain, that rivalships of opinion are favourable to the investigation of truth. The elaborate attempts of infidels to invalidate the authority of the gospel, have excited men of the greatest talents and genius to a more accurate examination of its nature and origin, and brought into light such proofs of the authenticity of the christian revelation, as seem to have now put the matter beyond dispute.

The variety of opinions entertained by different sects of christians, have also impelled them to examine every passage of the sacred writings with the most critical accuracy. These multiplied contests have consequently produced an immense mass of erudition ; and as the human mind, when once roused to action, seldom confines its excursions to one direction, but turns to different subjects

* By not properly considering the ways of providence, in the mixture of good and evil, Frederick II. King of Prussia, was hurried to the most blasphemous conclusions. Correspond, de Fred. II. Ro Prusse, tom. 1. p. 225, &c.

inquiry, it is not an improbable conclusion, that these collisions of opinion which struck out so many latent sparks of intellect, have been one of the causes of that general illumination which so pre-eminently distinguishes the nations of christendom from the inhabitants of the other parts of the world.

Christianity is not confined to minute creeds, multiplied ceremonies, or hierarchical establishments: all these things are in their nature fugitive and evanescent; but as subjects of dispute they may serve to exercise the ingenuity of man, and call his mental powers into action. Difference of opinion, in matters of religion, connected with freedom of inquiry, is favourable to the progress of intellect; but the intemperance of zeal, and the intolerance of bigotry, contract the limits of reason and philosophy. The mind, when accustomed to an implicit submission to authority in religion or science, loses its powers of exertion, and becomes incapable of improvement. In the middle ages, when the ignorance of the laity, had naturally and necessarily increased, to an exorbitant degree, the influence of the clergy, the church established a system of intolerance which extinguished freedom of thought, and checked all mental energy. The reformation contributed, in some degree, to restore the human mind to its natural liberty. When

that event took place, theological controversy was a grand trial of intellectual strength. the points in dispute came into contact with a temporal interest of great importance and magnitude. But the reformers no sooner saw their efforts crowned with success, than they imitated the conduct of the church from which they had separated, and confined the limits of truth, and the doctrines of salvation, within the narrow precincts of their own particular opinions.* The right of private judgment, which is the fundamental principle of protestantism, if not absolutely denied in theory, was soon renounced in spirit and violated in practice.† These evils, however, are not to be ascribed to christianity, but to a departure from its spirit and a violation of its precepts. A judicious and learned writer has shown from incontestible authorities, that persecution and intolerance have always originated from motives of policy and interest rather than from those of religion.‡

* Sleidan says, that in the year 1552, a grey friar asserted in preaching that those who have had no knowledge of Christ, and yet lived virtuously had been saved, and adds, that this doctrine was accounted blasphemous, and grievously complained of by the reformers. Sleidan's Comment. fol. 389.

† Ryan's Effects of Religion, p. 444 and 445.—Neale's History of the Puritans, vol. 4. p. 553, &c.

‡ Dr. Ryan has incontestably proved, that the persecutions of christians by the Roman emperors, arose from political motives; and that the intolerance of Romanists towards protestants, and of protestants

Those who are supreme in power, often think themselves infallible in judgment. But experience shews the bad effects of endeavouring to establish the dominion of one single creed over the minds of a numerous community. If the attempt do not succeed, it proves a source of rancour and animosities, incompatible with the spirit of christianity, and often the cause of civil commotions: if its success be complete, the consequences are less hostile to the tranquillity of society, but more inimical to mental improvement.* Neither one or the other of these cases has been exemplified in almost every country of Europe. The effects of christianity have been enumerated by Montesquiou, and ably delineated by Dr. Ryan; and its beneficial tendency has been acknowledged by Bolingbroke, Hume, Rousseau, and Gibbon.† It suffices here to

its effects towards Romanists, and also towards one another, with all their reciprocal persecutions originated in ambition, pride, avarice, revenge, and other inordinate passions, and not from the mere difference of opinions, or from a regard for truth. Effects of Religion, chap. 6. 1432—453.

* Dr. Paley observes, that an establishment with a complete toleration, combines liberty of conscience with the means of instruction, the progress of truth with the peace of society, the right of private judgment with the care of the public safety. Mor. and Polit. Philos. vol. 2. 1344.

† Montesquiou *Esprit des Loix*, liv. 24. chap. 3.—Ryan's *Effects of Religion*, chap. 3.—Bolingbroke's *Works*, vol. 4. p. 243.—Analysis of Bolingbroke, sect. 12.—Hume *Ess.* 11.—Rousseau's *Social Contract*, 1. 4 and 8.—*Emile*, vol. 3. p. 132.—Gibbon's *Dec. Rom. Emp.* p. 38 and 44.

observe, that christianity has ever been the herald of science and civilization. It has humanized and enlightened the barbarians who overturned the Roman empire, and made them acquainted with letters and arts. It could not produce its happy effects all at once; but continually struggling with the vices and ignorance of men, it gradually improved their morals and illumined their minds; and took an irradiating influence, as much, or perhaps more than to any other cause, the people of Europe owe their intellectual superiority to the rest of the human species.

In viewing the happy influence of christianity in this quarter of the globe, it is impossible not to anticipate the beneficial effects which must result from the vigorous and persevering efforts of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Dutch, Danish, and Moravian missions, as well as those of "Propaganda" at Rome, have made bold and noble attempts for the conversion of heathen in different countries, but none of those societies have been supported with the degree of vigour proportioned to the grandeur of the object. Their efforts have consequently been cramped, and confined to a comparatively narrow theatre, and often interrupted by various causes. But the Bible Society, which, to the glory of Britain, has originated

within her precincts, is supported by a generous and opulent public, and is already extending its ramifications into different countries of Europe in such a manner, that the propagation of the gospel, and the consequent civilization of mankind, promises, in process of time, to become the common object of christians. This active society, combining the zeal and energy of all denominations of christians, and all classes of people, in conjunction with missions and the establishment of native schools, forms a grand and magnificent scheme, which, if carried forward with energy, promises to do more towards the moral and intellectual improvement of the human race, than has ever been done during a long succession of ages--perhaps we might say ever since the days of the apostles. The monstrous idols of India, China, and Japan, may, in process of time, give way to the rational worship of the self-existent author of all existence--in the interior of Africa, yet untrodden by civilized man, science may flourish and temples may rise in honour of Jehovah, and the cannibals of New Zealand may feel the happy effects of christianity and civilization.

CHAP. VII.

EDUCATION and HABIT.

ALTHOUGH political and religious institutions are the most powerful of all moral causes in swaying the mind and forming the character, yet there are other impulses which have often a considerable influence in stimulating and directing the actions of men.

Among these secondary causes, the chief are education and habit, which are so nearly allied, as to be scarcely distinguishable from each other, by any line of separation. If indeed, we confine our notion of education to the instructions received in childhood, and consider habit as an assemblage of customs, or modes of thinking and acting imbibed in later years, and arising from the various circumstances of life, the two words will convey very different ideas. But by taking a more ex-

tended survey, we shall find that they signify precisely the same thing,—the general result of information, observation, and experience co-operating with the human passions and inclinations. Viewing the subject in this light we must, with Helvetius, adopt the well known axiom of Cicero, and consider education as continuing from the cradle to the grave, from the first dawn of infant perception, to the last moment of reasoning existence.

Considered in this point of view, education comprehends the whole intellectual life of man; and the developement of his faculties in all the different circumstances in which he may happen to be placed; and its power is acknowledged by all who have made the history of the human species the subject of their study and observation. Quintilian thinks that the minds and characters of men are formed almost wholly by education; and Locke appears to be nearly of the same opinion.* An elegant and philosophical writer of our own times, says “The prodigies effected by human art in all the objects around us—laws—government—commerce—religion; but above all the records of thought preserved in those volumes that fill our libraries: what are they but experiments by which nature

* Vide *Instit. Orat.* lib. 1. and *Locke on Education*, p. 2.

illustrates for our instruction, on her own grand scale, the varied range of man's intellectual powers, and the omnipotence of education in fashioning his mind."*

The intellectual powers of man are developed entirely by education. The mind is : first a perfect blank, fitted and ready to receive any kind of impressions. For these are dependent on the political, civil, and religious institutions under which we live, the persons with whom we are connected, and the circumstances in which we are placed : the different periods of life. Wholly the creatures of association and habit, the characters of men are formed by the instruction, conversation, and example of those with whom they mix in society, or whose ideas they imbibed in the course of their reading and studies. The aggregate of all these concurring circumstances being infinitely varied in the case of each nation, as well as of each individual, give rise to that diversity of character which is observable among civilized men, and make the difference between the savage and the savage. "If," says Helvetius, "all the Savoyards have in some degree, the same character, it is because chance has placed them in situations nearly similar, and that they almost all re-

*Dug. Stewart. Philosoph. Ess. Prelim. Dissert. p. 45.

ceive nearly the same education. Why are they all travellers? Because there is no living without money, and they have none at home. Why are they laborious? Because they are without assistance and without protection in the countries to which they transplant themselves, and bread is not to be had without labour. Why are they faithful and diligent? Because to be employed in preference to the natives, they must surpass them in diligence and fidelity. Why, in the last place, are they all frugal? Because having, like other men, an attachment to their native country, they go out beggars to return rich, and live on what they have accumulated.* Helvetius here observes, that to form in any man the character of the Savoyard, he must be placed in the same situation.

Some writers lay less stress upon education, and attribute many of its supposed effects to natural genius. This, indeed, is the soil of talents; but they owe their culture to education, without which they could scarcely vegetate, and certainly could not bloom or blossom. "The difference of natural talents in different men," says Dr. Smith, "is, in reality, much

* Helvetius' Treatise on Man, vol. 1. p. 77.—The observations here made on the Savoyards, are applicable to the Gallicians or Gallegos in Spain, and, in some measure, to the lower classes of the Scotch and Irish, who emigrate to England or America to ameliorate their circumstances.

less than we are aware of; and the difference of genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions when grown up to maturity, is not, upon many occasions, so much the cause as the effect of the division of labour. The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter for example, seems to arise not so much from nature as from habit and education. When they came into the world, and for the first five or six years of their existence, they were, perhaps, very much alike; and neither their parents nor play-fellows could perceive any remarkable difference. About that age, or soon after, they came to be employed in very different occupations. The difference of talents begins then to be noticed, and widens, by degrees, till at last the vanity of the philosopher is scarcely willing to acknowledge any resemblance.* Mr. Playfair, however, is far from laying so much stress on education, and so little on natural genius, and observes, "That the greatest inventors have seldom been educated to the art or science in which they have made improvements."† The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, seems to ascribe intellectual attain-

* Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. 1. p. 25.

† Playfair's Note *ibid.*, vol. 1. p. 25.

ments almost wholly to innate genius. "The power of instruction," says he, "is seldom of much efficacy, except in those happy dispositions where it is almost superfluous."* Genius, indeed, is sometimes known to burst through every obstacle, and shine with its native effulgence in spite of every disadvantage; while on some stupid and brutal minds all the force of instruction could produce no effect. These, however, are extraordinary cases, which cannot establish any general theory. Besides this, they refer less to that general education which involves and combines the whole series of human observations and experience throughout life, than to juvenile instruction and progress in letters and liberal arts. In acquiring these accomplishments, genius may sometimes owe all its success to its own powers, but it is always indebted to circumstances for calling them into exertion; and education greatly facilitates its efforts.

"Without fair cultures kind parental aid,
Without enlivening suns and genial showers,
And shelter from the blast,—in vain we hope
The tender plant should raise its blooming head,
Or yield the harvest promis'd in the spring.
Nor yet will every soil with equal stores
Repay the tiller's labour, or attend
His will obsequious, whether to produce
The olive or the laurel."

AKENSIDE.

* Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 1. chap. 4. p. 137. Mr. Gibbon adduces the example of the emperor Commodus to corroborate his

These last observations apply to individuals rather than to states ; but it must be allowed that individuals are the materials of which nations are composed. Habits of life are of great importance to communities, as they have an equal influence on the mind and the body, and may either diminish or augment the strength of the state. This the Greek and Roman legislators very well knew ; and they diligently studied not only to keep up the patriotism and courage of the people by every art of religion and policy, but also to increase their strength and activity by public games and gymnastic exercises. For these a late British senator of distinguished abilities and eminence was a strenuous advocate. But while every philosophical statesman must approve the general principle, few, perhaps, will agree with Mr. Windham, in imagining that pugilism must contribute to form a martial people. “ A smart contest this,” says he “ between Madox and Richman : why are we to boast so much of the valour of our troops : shewn at Talavera, at Vimiera, and at Maidstone and yet to discourage all the practices and

assertion. “ The influence of a polite age, and the labours of an attentive education, had never been able to infuse into the rude and brutal mind of Commodus, the least tincture of learning ; and the son of the philosophical Marcus Aurelius, was the first of the Roman emperors that was totally devoid of taste for the pleasures of the understanding.”
Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 1. chap. 4, p. 150.

habits that tend to keep alive these sentiments and feelings. The sentiments that filled the minds of the three thousand spectators who attended the two pugilists, were just the same in kind as those which inspired the higher combatants on the occasions here enumerated: it is the circumstances only in which they are displayed that make the difference.

“He that the world subdued, had only been
The holdest wrestler on the green.”

Mr. Windham combats the objection made to this theory—that other men have as much bravery as boxers. He acknowledges that courage is found in all classes, circumstances, and conditions. But he asks, whether habits and institutions, of one sort, have not a tendency to produce it more than others? “Courage,” he observes, “does not arise from the mere beating or being beaten, but from the sentiments excited by the contemplation and cultivation of such practices; and will it, says he, make no difference in the mass of the people, whether their amusements be all of a pacific and pleasurable nature, or of a sort that calls forth a continued admiration of prowess and hardihood?”* But popular diversions may be pacific without being effeminate. It is undoubtedly of the greatest importance that bravery should be held in estima-

* Mr. Windham's letter, dated at Felbrig, 17th August, 1809.

tion among the body of people from which the soldier is taken, but this will scarcely be effected by pugilistic exhibitions. The Romans regarded the combats of gladiators as a necessary stimulant to excite the courage of the citizens, and inspire them with martial sentiments by accustoming them to scenes of blood and slaughter; but Gibbon has very justly observed, that this theory is confuted by the valour and heroism of ancient Greece and modern Europe. It is difficult, indeed, to conceive how courage could be acquired by sitting in safety in the amphitheatre, to see gladiators hew each other to pieces; for the bold and the brave can never adopt the sentiments expressed in these verses of Lucretius,

“ Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem.”

Such feelings are more congenial to a selfish and effeminate than to a generous and manly disposition.

Bodily strength and activity, and a capability of supporting fatigue, qualifications absolutely necessary for a military life, depend almost entirely on habit and exercise. The savage, exercised in hunting, is more swift in the chase than the civilized man: the superior agility of the former, as well as the various knowledge of the latter, is the effect of habit. There is no reason to suppose that an ancient

Roman was naturally stronger than an Englishman of the present age ; but by the use of vigorous exercise and severe discipline, the Roman legionaries were able to perform the longest marches, although carrying burdens that would oppress the weakness of the modern soldier. The human body is a machine of curious construction : the vigour and perfection of its movements depend on due tension, and may be impaired or even destroyed by neglect and relaxation. A slender and diminutive porter or miller, is by habit often rendered capable of carrying burdens that would press many an athletic nobleman to the ground, and a Hercules would lose all his strength and even the power of motion, by remaining in a state of continual repose.

Cards, dice, and all other sedentary games ought to be discountenanced by every person of taste, and by every friend of his country. They agitate and fatigue the mind without contributing to its improvement ; and they consume a portion of time that might be much better employed in useful studies or salubrious exercises.* Popular diversions ought to be calculated to display and increase activity,

* It is not intended to include in this description, the amusements of the theatre. These, indeed, although they occupy a few sedentary hours, are a fertile source of information as well as of entertainment, and are congenial to a mind possessing taste and refinement.

vigour, and dexterity. Such were the gymnastic and equestrian exercises used by the Greeks in all their cities, as well as at the Isthmæan, Nemean, and Olympic games.* In order to render a nation warlike and great, it is requisite to inspire the mass of the people with the spirit of patriotism, and a habitual esteem for fame. This, perhaps, could not be better effected than by an extensive establishment of military schools, and inviting all young men to learn the science of tactics, and inure themselves to discipline, by proposing honorary rewards to those who excel. The effects of such a system may be, in some measure, estimated by considering the alacrity with which great a number of the militia in the late war volunteered into the line. Few of these men had they not been previously disciplined and inspired with martial ideas in the militia which may here be considered as a great military school, would have been induced to come forward in the cause of their country, but attending exhibitions of pugillism.†

The term education is used in popular language to signify merely the instruction

* See West's Dissert. on the Olymp. games.

† Bull and bear baiting, and cockfighting, are amusements still more degrading than pugillism. They may inspire the people with cruelty but not with courage. The Spanish bull-fights are a diversion of a more noble and elevated nature than the bull-baitings in England.

youth; and even in this confined view, it merits the attention of states. Among the Lacedæmonians, it formed a considerable part of their political system, and produced wonderful effects. The janissaries, who are the chief support of the Ottoman empire, as they were formerly the instruments of its aggrandizement, are trained from early youth to the profession of arms; and all the Turkish ministers of state and great officers, both civil and military, are educated almost from childhood in the seraglio. In propagating their faith, the Moslems are extremely attentive to the education of youth. In all the considerable towns in the interior of Africa, schools are established, where children are taught to read the koran, and are instructed in the faith of the prophet. "A bias is thus fixed in the mind by the priest, who forms the character of the young disciple, which no accident of life can ever afterwards remove."* Every one knows how greatly the jesuits excelled in the art of education, and how perfectly they fixed the character of their disciples. In every part of the world, a jesuit was the same kind of being in regard to his ideas, prejudices, and views; and the whole society, dispersed into every quarter of the globe, was one vast body

* Parke's Travels in Africa, p. 61.

animated by the same soul. No circumstance in the history of the human mind exhibits in more striking light the influence of education in the formation of character.

CHAP. VIII.

LETTERS and ARTS.

AMONGST the variety of circumstances which influence national character as well as national fame and prosperity, literature, sciences, and arts, are not the least powerful. All the nations and tribes of whom we have any knowledge, exhibit some faint outlines of religion and government ; but letters and arts are the peculiar and conspicuous characteristics of a civilized people. Without the use of letters the human mind dissipates or corrupts the ideas committed to its charge ; its noblest faculties, not being supplied either with models or materials, cannot display their powers. Without intellectual pursuits, no nation was ever great or illustrious. Had it not been for the academy of Plato, and the lycæum of Aristotle, Athens would have long since been consigned to oblivion.

An eccentric philosopher of the last century declares it to be his opinion, that literature and arts, and the habits which they produce will prove fatal to Europe, and that learning corrupts morality.* This strange assertion can only be regarded as an evidence of the weakness of the author's understanding, and his contracted views of human life and manners. One of the greatest philosophers and orators of antiquity, contemplates the subject in a very different light, and bestows upon learning and philosophy the most encomiastic applause.† By letters we multiply experiences with these for our companions, we live in remote ages and in distant countries; but without these instructors, we are confined to a narrow sphere of observation, and to a short period of existence. By the sciences and arts the deficiencies of human strength are supplied, and the powers of man augmented to an almost unlimited extent: immense oceans are traversed, magnificent structures are raised, and numerous works are performed of which the uncivilized barbarian could have no conception. In contemplating the prodigies effected by human art, we cannot but acknowledge the truth of Lord Bacon's aphorism, that "knowledge is power." It was superior

* Rousseau *Emile*, tom. 3. p. 163.

† Cicero *Tusc. Quest.* 5.

knowledge more than superior strength that so soon rendered the Europeans masters of the new continent, and that enabled a handful of Englishmen to bring under their subjection so large a portion of India. By letters, sciences, and arts, men rise from weakness to strength, and emerge from savage ignorance to almost angelical intelligence.

Men in ostensible and elevated situations are generally desirous of leaving behind them some memorial of their existence. The desire is natural, and may be productive of public utility : it may operate as a check to vice and a stimulus to virtue, and inspire the rulers of the world with a noble emulation, by exciting them to contemplate, in distant perspective, the remembrance and applause of posterity. By letters the actions of men are commemorated, and their names are rescued from oblivion ; but “ When the clods of his hillock are scattered, or his funeral stones are thrown down, the glory of the savage perishes for ever.”* When we reflect on the numerous host of kings and chiefs, whose memory time has swept away from the earth, and left them no traces in the records of mankind—when we consider that all their exertions and enterprises lie buried in the silence of ages, we can-

* I have here borrowed an expression from Mr. Turner. History of the Anglo Saxons.

not but see the importance of letters, and the claim to support and encouragement which they have on every enlightened government. They merit, in an equal degree, the attention of princes and their subjects; for the recitation or recollection, as well as the view of great actions, tends to exalt the soul and to kindle a generous emulation. As memorials of past times and of departed heroes, history and poetry have a decided advantage over painting and sculpture: the monuments of the latter can exist only in a few places: they are liable to a variety of accidents; and when defaced or destroyed, they cannot be easily restored to their original perfection; but the memorials transmitted to posterity by letters, are exempted from the injuries of time, being capable of unlimited diffusion and perpetual renovation.

The songs of the primeval poets have, in every country, except Judea, and perhaps Egypt, been the original source and basis of history.† By these the vague traditions of

* *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona
Multi, sed omnes illacrymabiles
Urgentur, ignotique longa
Nocte, carent quia vato sacro.*

HORACE, lib. 4. ode 9.

† Moses was the first historian amongst the Hebrews; and it does not appear that the Egyptians ever cultivated poetry. See Russell's *Hist. Anct. Eur.* vol. 1. p. 117.

great actions and important events were consigned to popular remembrance, and transmitted from generation to generation. Homer may be considered as the primitive historian, as well as the earliest poet of Greece. The arrival of Eneas in Italy, and the descent of Romulus from the heroes of Troy, so elegantly sung by Virgil, and so gravely recorded by Livy and other Roman historians, are tales derived from doubtful tradition. Saxo Grammaticus has, in his famous history of Scandinavia, arranged the incidents related by the ancient Scalds, the inscriptions on monumental stones, and other loose and unconnected materials into a narration, which, by the elegance of its composition, causes learning and taste almost to forget its fabulous origin and fraudulent texture. Supplying, by his own invention, the want of connexion and dates, he has framed a fictitious chronology, and given to Denmark a tissue of orderly and splendid history, through twenty-four royal successions before the christian era. In this he has imitated Geoffrey,* of Monmouth, who having collected the poems of the Welsh bards, digested them into a regular narrative, and by the aid of a fertile imagination, brought

* Geoffrey, of Monmouth, and Saxo Grammaticus, were nearly cotemporaries. Geoffrey finished his history about A. D. 1140, and Saxo Grammaticus died A. D. 1208, aged upwards of seventy.

Brutus from Troy, in order to confer on his nation a brilliant origin and an august antiquity.

In almost every country poetry existed previous to history. The Celtic bards attended their kings or chiefs to record their genealogies and sing their praises, and also to celebrate the actions of illustrious men. In military expeditions, besides their business of animating their soldiers, they were employed as the historians of warlike transactions; and these songs were, in process of time, considered as the most authentic repositories of historical facts.* Poetry existed amongst all barbarous nations. The Gothic tribes differed but little from each other in their ideas and manners. Saxons, Franks, Danes, and Normans had their poets and harpers, whose performances were afterwards moulded by the circumstances of the countries in which they settled; and the Anglo Saxons, as well as the French, had their metrical romances.†

As poetry was the first branch of literature that was cultivated, it was also that which had the greatest and the most general effect on the minds of barbarians. Of its influence on the human imagination, all nations have been

* Cordiner's introduct. to Extracts from Torfæus, p. 124. Thordus Torfæus was a native of Iceland, and his great abilities procured him the patronage of Frederick III.—Christiern V.—and Frederick I. kings of Denmark. He died about A. D. 1720, aged eighty-one.

† Ellis' Specimen of English metrical romance, vol. 1. sect. 1.

sensible, and almost every individual can attest its power. (But its effects are always the most conspicuous amongst barbarians, whose reasoning faculties are dull, whose imaginations are lively and ardent, and their passions easily excited. Among civilized men its influence is less perceptible, as these require arguments and proofs rather than rapturous excitement, and examine the rationality of motives and the probability of success, before they determine on action. The effect which poetry produces, does not arise from the mere passive perception of the images which it presents, nor from the sentiments which it inculcates, but from the excitement which it gives to the natural activity of the mind. It operates by giving an impulse to the current of thought and feeling, by awakening in the mind a train of lively emotions, and by exciting the imagination to work out a tissue of impressive ideas, borrowed from the circumstances of life, and deriving their colouring from strong passions or powerful affections.

When the song of the poet is the echo of familiar feelings, it diffuses a train of affecting movements throughout the imagination. The northern nations used poetry as a stimulus to excite the people to war, to carnage, and to pine, as well as to record their martial ex-

ploits ; and they could scarcely have contrived a more powerful engine for effecting that purpose. "The bards," says Mr. Gibbon, have attracted the notice of all who have attempted to investigate the antiquities of the Celts, the Germans, and the Scandinavians. Their genius and character, as well as the reverence paid to their office, have been sufficiently illustrated. But we cannot so easily express or even conceive the martial enthusiasm which they kindled in the minds of men accustomed to war and carnage, and delighting in deeds of arms. Among a polished people, a taste for poetry is cultivated rather to amuse the fancy than to excite the passions of the soul. And yet, when in calm retirement, we peruse the combats described by Homer and Tasse, we are insensibly seduced by the fiction, and feel a momentary glow of martial ardour. But how faint, how cold is the sensation which a peaceful mind can receive from solitary study ! It was in the hour of battle or in the feast of victory that the bards celebrated the glory of heroes of ancient days, the ancestors of those warlike chieftains who listened with transport to their artless but animating strains. The view of arms and of danger heightened the effect of the military song ; and the passions which it tended to excite, the desire of

me, and the contempt of death, were the habitual sentiments of a German mind.”* It is scarcely possible to conceive a more just idea of the different impressions made by poetry on the minds of barbarians and on those of polished men, than that which may be formed from this luminous representation.

With the religion, warfare, politics, and manners of the Scandinavians, poetry was closely connected: their glory and happiness rested on its basis. To preserve and perpetuate the memory of martial exploits beyond the short period of human existence, was an object of primary importance among the warriors of ancient times. The hope of holding an honourable place in the minds of future generations, animated the patriots and heroes of Greece and Rome; and the same passion prevailed in its full force among the northern barbarians. To the powers of poetry, to the martial song of the Scald, the dying warrior looked up for the perpetuity of his fame, and every nation has cultivated this art with greater enthusiasm than the Scandinavians; and with more energy and effect.†

“The theme was glorious war, the dear delight,
Of shining best in field and daring most in fight.”

PENROSE.

* Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 1. chap. 9. p. 374.

† Vide Mallet's North. Antiq. vol. 1. p. 223, &c.

✓ The influence of Scandinavian poetry was heightened by its celestial origin. A deity called Braga, residing in the palace of Valhalla, was supposed to preside over poetry and music, and to inspire the Scalds, whose war songs were characterised by a gigantic and savage sublimity, corresponding with their terrific and sanguinary religion. No warrior undertook a military expedition without being attended by his Scalds, who were employed to record his exploits and to animate his soldiers. To their war songs the Scandinavian hero was indebted for his fame; and to acquire this poetical immortality, together with the felicity expected in the halls of Odin, he exposed his life with an enthusiasm and intrepidity unknown to modern times.

After the northern nations were converted to christianity, and had made some progress in civilization, their manners became less savage and sanguinary. Their poetry also took a milder colouring from the change in their social circumstances. The wild and horrific sublimity of the poems of Scandinavia was succeeded by the more pleasing charms of minstrelsy. But established customs are not readily abolished, nor ancient notions easily

* Partholinus De Cause Contemp. Mortis a Danis. lib. 1. chap. 8. Bartholinus preserves one of the ancient songs used by the Scandinavian to animate their soldiers, and excite them to valorous achievements.

oliterated. The minstrels of the middle ages, like the Celtic bards, and the Scalds of Scandinavia, were retained by princes and feudal chiefs, not only to record their genealogies, celebrate their achievements, and sing their praises, but also to excite the courage of their soldiers and vassals. Talliefer, a famous minstrel, accompanied William the Conqueror to the battle of Hastings, and marched at the head of the Norman troops singing the song of Charlemagne, Roland, and Oliver.* The twelfth and thirteen centuries were the most splendid era of the minstrels; but they perished during several successive ages.† The manners of the times and the genius of poetry, however, were changed by the progress of civilization, and the beneficent influence of Christianity. Generosity began to be blended with valour, and compassion to be considered as the concomitant of courage. The song of the minstrel, though hurling defiance at the enemies of his chieftain, breathed sentiments of mercy to those who submitted to his arms, and exhibited none of those horrid pictures of indiscriminate carnage, rapine, and devastation, which characterised the poetry of Scandinavia.

* Ellis' Specim. Eng. Metrical Romance, vol. I. sect. 1.

† The Morlachians have at the present day their minstrels, and there is never a feast without them. See Cassa's Travels, part I.

The bards and harpers of Wales, Ireland and Scotland, held the same rank and performed the same office as the minstrels in England and on the continent. Of these, the Welsh bards have obtained the greatest celebrity. Aided by the prophecies of Merlin they animated their countrymen to a successful stand, in the fastnesses of their mountains against the Saxon and afterwards the Norman power, till Edward I. reduced them to subjection.* Their songs, like those of the minstrels, were tempered with the spirit of christianity, and no longer exhibited the sanguinary features of the original Celtic poetry; but they were of a sufficiently martial cast to inspire the people with all the ardour of courage and patriotism.

The effects of poetry and music on the minds of the Highlanders, have been remarked by a number of writers. "It is not to be imagined," says Mrs. Murray, "what an effect the Gælic music has upon Highlanders; when rowing, grinding, fulling, or at other laborious works, their tunes and songs seem to invigorate every nerve in their bodies."† Sounds and

* Mr. Jones explodes the generally received opinion that Edward made a general massacre of the Welsh bards. Hist. Brecknock, vol. 1. chap. 8.

† Mrs. Murray's Scotland, vol. 2. p. 365.—See also Mrs. Grant's Highland, vol. 2. p. 135.

ideas make the strongest impressions on the mind when they are fully comprehended by the understanding, and connected with familiar circumstances or interesting events; and the poetry of the Highlanders is of this description.

To the power of association every rational being appears to be subjected, and from this source poetry and music derive their influence on the passions and affections. Images which are "a mirror in every mind," and sentiments which every bosom returns an echo, cannot fail of making a deep impression. From such images and such sentiments, associated with known and familiar scenes, the famous song called "*Rance de Vaches*" derives its influence on the minds of the Swiss soldiers in foreign service. This poetical composition, although it abounds in vivid and affecting imagery, could be read by a native of any other country without extraordinary emotion; but its effects on the Swiss soldiers in foreign countries, especially on the young recruits, are so impressive, that before the revolution it was prohibited to be sung in their regiments in the service of France. Whenever a groupe of these unseasoned soldiers amused themselves with singing this affecting song, it was always observed, that either numerous desertions, or a kind of melancholy longing after their native

country was the almost infalliable consequence. This kind of mental disease, which the French call "*Maladie du pays*," often admits of no other method of cure than that of indulging the young soldier with a furlough to revisit his native land and the scenes of his juvenile life. This celebrated song, the whole of which is too long to insert, commences in the following manner:—

Quand reverrai je en quelque jour
Tous les objets de mon amour ?
Nos clairs ruisseaux,
Nos côteaùx,
Nos hameaux,
Nos montaignes,
Et l'ornement de nos montaignes
La gentille Isabeau,
A l'ombre d'un ormeau,
Quand danserai je au son du chalumeau, &c.

The following is as literal a translation as the genius of French and English poetry will admit:—

Oh! When shall I return to see
All the objects dear to me?
Our lofty hills,
Our chrystal rills,
Our cots upon the mountain's side.
Oh! When with Isabel so gay
Our hamlets joy and pride,
Shall I dance the roundelay,
Beneath the shade of elm tree high,
To the flutes soft melody? &c.

From this specimen, the reader will readily see the general tendency of this affecting song, which displays, throughout, the same pic-

resque images, and the same train of romantic sentiment. But a native of another country will not easily conceive how powerfully it strikes the imagination of a Swiss, in some situations.

This is, perhaps, the only instance of modern poetry producing so powerful and singular effects. Its influence appears to be derived from the local peculiarities of the country to which it refers, and to the social circumstances of its inhabitants. Switzerland resembles the highlands of Scotland; but its features are more gigantic: many of its districts, inclosed by prodigious mountains, amidst the roar of cataracts, and all the grand scenery of nature, seem to be secluded from the rest of the world. From the simple habits of domestic life, in these sequestered recesses, the natives acquire a peculiar cast of ideas and character. When a Swiss recruit arrives in France, the romantic scenery of his native hills vanishes from his eyes, but remains impressed on his memory and imagination, and closely associated with domestic recollections. The restraints also and regular discipline of the military life are widely different from the simple and uncontrolled habits of his early youth, and render him more feelingly sensible of his change of country. A song, therefore, which presents a train of images borrowed

from the scenes of his former life, and coloured from kindred affections, strikes all the chords of his soul, and makes on his mind a deep impression.

Popular songs are the species of poetry which, in every country, has the most powerful and the most extensive influence. They are diffused among all classes of the people; they animate the mariner on board of his vessel, the mechanic in his workshop, and the peasant in following his plough. The songs and ballads of a country influence the morals and manners, and even the principles of its inhabitants, as much, perhaps, as any adventitious circumstance whatever, if we except its religion, its laws, and its political revolutions; and some writers even exclude these exceptions. Every one, who has had the opportunity, must have observed how greatly the impure and bacchanalian songs of the debauchee contribute to inspire a taste for licentious profligacy, and how much pious hymns stir up the mind to devotion. A very little more than half a century ago, the popular songs "The Highland Laddie," "Over the Water to Charley," with others of the same treasonable tendency, served to keep up the spirits of the jacobite party, whose infatuated adherents hoped to overturn the most beneficent dynasty that had ever reigned over England, and to restore to

the throne a family which had always been hostile to liberty. The loyal and patriotic compositions "God save the King," "Rule Britannia," &c. both attest and excite the attachment of Britons to their monarch and their country. The Marseillois hymn, and the animated tune of "Ca ira," with other republican airs and songs, contributed to impel the people of revolutionary France to rush upon every daring enterprise, and upon every crime.*

Dramatic poetry, though less diffused than that of popular ballads, has, in every nation, a powerful influence on a very considerable part of the community. The theatrical representations which obtain, in any country, the greatest popularity, not only exhibit a tolerably just criterion of the national taste, but also contribute to form the national character. In France, about the commencement of the revolution, the dramatic pieces were, for the most part, of a tendency hostile to monarchy; and the enthusiastic applause bestowed on the republican characters of Greece and Rome, indicated the state of the public mind. During the republican period, the stage was entirely under the influence and

* It would be amusing, and not uninteresting, to peruse a collection of the popular songs of the different nations of Europe during the late convulsions.

direction of the government ; and the numerous theatres of Paris served to inspire the crowded assemblies with sentiments of eternal enmity to kings. The imperial sway of Napoleon effected another change ; and every thing of a republican tendency was banished from the stage. Every change in the government of France was immediately preceded or followed by a corresponding revolution in the drama.

Poetry is the most impressive when accompanied by music. The Hebrew psalms had this advantage, which gave them an additional force in exciting the mind to devotion in the worship of the creator. The lyric compositions of the Greeks, besides having sublimity and beauty to strike the soul and win the affections, possessed also the advantage of musical accompaniments, admirably adapted to increase the animation which they kindled. And they were usually exhibited at solemn festivals and public rejoicings, where the splendour, the bustle, and parade of the scene concurred to awaken the strongest emotions of patriotism.

The power of sounds is known in all nations ; whether barbarous or civilized. The mode of their operation is a mysterious problem in physics ; but their effect is sufficiently ascertained and deeply felt ; and it is evident that nature has connected with them certain emo-

ons which excite or allay all the passions of the soul. In some instances, simple sounds produce as powerful effects as the most laboured compositions. The American savages are excited to battle and carnage by the war whoop, in the same manner as were the ancient Celts and Scandinavians by the war songs of their bards and their Scalds. From this principle it proceeds, that all civilized nations have their military music so animating to the mind of the soldier, while the savage tribes supply, by tremendous shouts, the want of musical instruments and skill.

Amongst enlightened and polished nations, poetry and every species of literature have a powerful but generally a beneficial effect. Besides transmitting to posterity illustrious names and noble actions, letters are the repository of the arts and sciences, diffusing them to an unlimited extent, and facilitating their constant improvement, by collecting and perpetuating the discoveries and experience of successive generations.

Literature, when accompanied by genius, extends its influence over the whole intellectual creation. "How incredible," says Mr. Young, "is the power of great talents! How many women, fair as Laura, have been loved so tenderly; but wanting a Petrarch to illustrate the passion, have lived and died in

oblivion, whilst his lines, not written to direct conduct thousands, under the impulse of feelings which genius only can excite, to mingle in idea, their melancholy sighs with those of the poet, who consecrated these remains to immortality.”* The same writer, in speaking of the fountain of Vaucluse, and the ruin called by the common people “Le Chateau de Petrarch,” makes a judicious and tasteful remark on the animation which literary talents are capable of giving to inanimate objects. “The scene,” says he, “is sublime; but what renders it truly interesting, is the celebrity which great talents have given it. The power of rocks, and water, and mountains, even in their boldest features to arrest attention and fill the breast with touching sensations, is not derived from inanimate nature. To give energy to such sensations, it must receive animation from the creative touch of a vivid fancy. Described by the poet, or connected with the residence, actions, passions, or pursuits of great genius, it lives as it were personified by talents, and commands the interest that breathes around whatever is consecrated by fame.”†

Genius and talents often require the fostering aid of opulence and power, especially in

* A. Young's Travels in France, jour. August 29, 1788.

† Young's Travels, *ibid.*

the dawn of their appearance, in ages not completely enlightened, and in countries where the taste of the public is not sufficiently refined to afford them a liberal patronage and to excite emulation. "How many mathematicians and men excelling in every branch of science," says an eminent writer, "has France produced since science has there been encouraged and honoured! Numbers would equally be excited in other countries to the attainment of science, in circumstances equally favourable."* Cicero also observes, "That honour nourishes the arts, and that the love of glory is a powerful incitement to literary studies."† The progress of literature and arts ought to be one of the chief concerns of every government and people. The productions of genius are a more fertile source of national glory than the most splendid triumphs. The exertions of intellect endure from age to age with undiminished splendour. Athens was less wealthy than Carthage, less warlike than Sparta; but Athens was the seat of letters and arts, and thus has obtained a lasting celebrity.

Governments cannot create genius; but they can promote its cultivation and stimulate

* Kirwan's Essay on Human Happiness, p. 187.

† *Honos alit artes omnesque incenduntur ad studia gloriæ.* Cicero *Tusc. Quest. I.*

its exertions. In England, learning of every kind was honoured at the courts of Elizabeth and her successor James I. and was encouraged both by the patronage and the example of these sovereigns. The effects of this encouragement were sufficiently conspicuous. During the short period of seventy years, which elapsed from the middle of Elizabeth's reign to the restoration, flourished many of the greatest men that England ever produced. Shakespeare, Bacon, Spencer, Sidney, Hooker, Taylor, Napier, Milton, Cudworth, and several others of that period, are names that would do honour to any age or nation. These writers, however, were more distinguished by original genius, depth and brilliancy of thought, energy of expression, and profound erudition, than by correctness or elegance of stile.

The restoration introduced a new taste in literature, and a stile more polished and classical. Charles II. was a prince of some learning as well as of natural genius, and had an elegant taste. He and his principal adherents had, during their long exile, acquired, on the continent, and particularly at the court of France, a correctness of stile very different from the negligent luxuriance displayed by the English writers of that age. The celebrated writers patronised by Louis XIV. inspired those of England with the spirit of emulation; and

style introduced at the restoration, cultivated and improved by Dryden, Pope, Addison, and others, who were carried forward by the impulse, caused the eighteenth century to be regarded as the Augustan age of British literature. The progress of the sciences kept pace with that of letters. Halley, Flamstead, and others, made important discoveries in astronomy; and the great Sir Isaac Newton, establishing the theories of attraction and gravitation, as well as of light and colours, surpassed all his predecessors in natural philosophy.

Letters and arts are the sources of the most permanent national glory. The ambitious politician may fancy that a lambent flame of glory will play around his name; but when a few short years are passed, his plans and himself are laid in the dust. Soon after the death of Alexander, his empire was dismembered; but the empire founded by Aristotle continued for twenty centuries; and till the revival of learning, he was the intellectual dictator of Europe. The Medici, of Florence, acquired more fame from the share which they had in promoting the culture of letters and arts, than from the immense wealth which they had accumulated; and the name of Leo X. is rendered more illustrious by his patronage of letters, than by his possession of the chair of

St. Peter. The encouragement and support which Louis XIV. afforded to learning, at the expence of only a few thousands, have shed greater lustre on his memory and on the French nation, than all his military enterprises, which cost him more than ten times as many millions. His destructive wars exhausted the resources of his country, and drew upon him the merited execration of Europe; but his patronage of letters has cast a blaze of glory around his name, which no clouds of envy can obscure, and no power of oblivion can ever extinguish. The influence of literature, sciences, and arts; the glory of princes, on the character and circumstances of nations, and on the general happiness of mankind, is extensive and powerful beyond all calculation. It may, indeed, be considered as one of the most important agencies in the civilization of the human species; a higher degree of intellectual improvement is the cause of that political superiority which Europe possesses over the other quarters of the globe.

CHAP. IX.

AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, &c.

AGRICULTURE, commerce, and manufactures, have no small influence on the circumstances and character of nations. Agriculture has in the power of changing the physical appearance of the earth, and the nature of the atmosphere, by draining unwholesome swamps and converting the gloomy desert into a terrestrial paradise. This first of sciences is the chief support of kingdoms and states, the essential basis of their strength. "The real power and splendour of a nation consist in the number of inhabitants, well supplied with the necessities of this life. Subsistence is the proper measure of population, and the earth is the source of subsistence. All other means of wealth and dominion, such as commerce, abundance of the precious metals and extent of

colonies, promote the true prosperity of a state only as they encourage agriculture, which is the most valuable of the arts as well as the most solid and durable basis of plenty, power, and prosperity."* Agriculture was early understood and diligently practised among all the civilized nations of antiquity. It converted the swampy marshes of Chaldee and Egypt, and the stony hills of Palestine into fertile fields of corn and luxuriant pastures. It has covered with waving harvests the countries formerly shaded by the dismal gloom of the vast Hyrcinian forest : it has embellished with the richest vineyards, the banks of the Rhine, and the provinces of Burgundy and Champagne where the production of the grape was, in the time of Strabo, considered as impossible.†

Ceres, the goddess of husbandry, made a conspicuous figure in the Grecian mythology; she was honoured by solemn festivals; and her worship was celebrated with mysterious rites and grateful veneration. Among the Romans, agriculture was regarded as a liberal art; it was the only employment, besides those of the magistracy and war, that the citizen

* Kett's Elements, vol. 2. p. 334.

† Strabo Geog. lib. 4. p. 223. In the time of Strabo, it was thought that grapes could not ripen to the north of the Cevennes, and the cold of a Gallic winter seems to have been proverbial.

as were permitted to exercise; and in the earlier ages of the republic, consuls and dictators thought it no disgrace to put their hands to the plough. But since the downfall of the Roman empire, the policy of modern Europe has been more favourable to arts, manufactures, and commerce than to agriculture.*

The sagacious author of the "Wealth of Nations," observes, "That according to the natural order of things, the greater part of the capital of every growing society is first directed to agriculture, afterwards to manufactures, and last of all to foreign commerce.† But he observes that in all the states of modern Europe this order has been, in many respects, inverted. The foreign trade of some of their cities has produced all the finer manufactures, which, together with commerce, have given birth to the principal improvements of agriculture. The oppressions of the feudal system seem to have forced things into this retrograde and unnatural order.—On the dissolution of the Roman empire, the chiefs and principal leaders of the northern nations acquired or usurped large portions of desolated lands, which having thus monopolized, the laws of entail and primogeniture—laws unknown to the Greeks and the Romans, were established for the pre-

* Smith's Wealth of Nations, vol. 1. p. 5.

† Smith's Wealth of Nations, vol. 2. p. 83.

servation of the baronial families ; and by the regulations the lands remained almost whole in the hands of great proprietors.

It must be allowed that no small part of the prosperity as well as the character of a people depends on the mode in which landed property is distributed. When the soil of a country is divided among a small number of persons, the great proprietors seldom pay much attention to the management of their estates. Their negligence of owners gives rise to the rapacity of agents, and the pernicious practice of underletting, so frequent in Ireland, Spain, and several other countries. When the profits of the land are swallowed up by a few individuals, the great mass of the peasantry, occupying small farms under exorbitant rents, are too poor and act on too limited a scale to make agricultural improvements, while their abject condition gives a tincture of barbarism and degradation to their character.

But in regard to Dr. Smith's observations on the inversion of the natural order of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce in Europe, it does not seem to have taken place in so great a degree as he imagines. It is certain that, in every country, agriculture must naturally and necessarily have been the first employment of human industry, as without it, to a greater or less degree, no people could subsist.

Manufactures, at least of the coarser sort, must have come next in order; for after procuring provisions, men must in the next place, except in very warm climates, have endeavoured to provide themselves with some kind of clothing. But manufactures could not be carried on to any great extent without commerce. Few countries possess every thing necessary to the perfection of manufactures, and as few, perhaps, can afford a market sufficient for their encouragement. From these considerations it is evident, that the natural order of things, in regard to the direction of human industry, however interrupted or impeded, could never be wholly inverted by any political arrangements; for the call of the natural appetites is more urgent than the solicitations of fashion: the means of subsistence must be secured to men before they seek for superfluities; and the wants of necessity are therefore, in every country, antecedent to those of conveniency and elegance. But the attention which modern statesmen have generally paid to the interests of manufactures and commerce, in preference to those of agriculture, seems to be founded in the consideration that the former being of a nature more complex and more dependent on adventitious and varying circumstances, have a greater need of encouragement. At the same time it must be observed, that these three great

branches of human industry are dependent on each other for their success. The arts of civilized life are, indeed, so intimately connected that scarcely any one of them can be brought to a state of perfection without the aid of several others. Agriculture supplies the manufacturer with food as well as with materials. Manufactures are the chief support of commerce, and both these together afford a market for agricultural productions.*

The influence of agriculture on the circumstances and character of nations is very considerable. As a proof of its effects in regard to national prosperity, Mr. Young observes, that nine-tenths of the exports of Lombardy consist of agricultural productions; and it is worthy of notice, that although subsisting by agriculture and importing manufactures, these countries must be ranked amongst the most

* The want of manufactures and commerce seems to have been one of the causes of the low state of agriculture during the middle ages, and of the famines which, as history informs us, so frequently happened. It may be objected that agriculture flourishes greatly in China, with very little aid from foreign commerce. But the Chinese have very considerable manufactures, and the inland trade of their vast empire is very extensive. Besides these considerations it must be observed, that the agriculture of China is calculated for a numerous but poor population and carried on in a parsimonious manner although with great assiduity. Such, indeed, must always be the case where the people are numerous and poor, and luxury is confined to a few individuals. These remarks might probably be applicable to Chaldea, Egypt, and some other countries, where agriculture is said to have been assiduously carried on without much foreign commerce.

ourishing in the world, abounding with large and magnificent towns, decorated in a manner that sets all comparison at defiance: the country every where intersected by canals for the purposes of navigation or irrigation, with splendid roads, and an immense population, is productive of such public revenues as shew that if Italy were united under one head, she would be classed among the first powers of Europe. "When it is considered," says Mr. Young, "that all this has been effected under governments not the best in Europe, when we farther reflect that England has for a century enjoyed the best government that exists, we shall be forced to confess, perhaps with astonishment, that she has not made more considerable advances in agriculture and in the cultivation of her territory. The wastes of the three kingdoms are enormous, and far exceeding in proportional extent, all that are to be found in Italy, while of our cultivated districts there are but a few provinces remarkable for their improvements. Whoever has viewed Italy with any degree of attention must admit, that had if a proportion of her territory, containing as many people as the three British kingdoms, had for a century enjoyed as free a government, giving attention to what has been the principal object, (*viz.*) agriculture instead of trade and manufactures, they would, at this

time, have made almost every acre of their country a fertile garden, and would have been in every respect a greater, richer, and more flourishing people than we can pretend to be. What they have done under their present governments justifies this assertion : we, blessed with liberty, have little to exhibit of superiority.” The same writer then remarks the effects which this assiduous attention to agriculture produces on the prosperity and manners of the people, and observes, that at Lodi, a town containing ten or twelve thousand inhabitants, the theatre was superb and the company elegant.—“Water, clover, cows, cheese, money, music—these,” says Mr. Young, “are the combinations that string Italian nerves to enjoyment, and afford lessons of government to northern politicians.”*

Since these observations were made, twenty-seven years have elapsed ; and the improvements which have taken place in this kingdom, in the various branches of the farming business, with respect to the inclosing and draining of waste lands, the cultivation of corn, and the breeding and feeding of cattle, within this space of time, exceed every thing of the kind

* Young’s Trav. Journ. 11th Oct. 1789. But Mr. Young must have perceived in his travels that many parts of Europe, and even of Italy, could not by any mode of husbandry be made so productive of wealth as the country which he is here describing.

that had ever before been performed in a century. To Mr. Young is certainly due the credit of being one of the first who directed the attention of the proprietors and principal farmers towards these improvements, and he has lived to see a considerable part of their beneficial effects. Not only have elegant farms and commodious cottages arisen in places which, thirty years ago, were desert, but the yeomanry, the farmers, and even the labouring peasantry live in a more elegant and comfortable stile, and are become more polished as well as more intelligent. The country has assumed a new aspect; and the numerous class of people engaged in husbandry has assumed a new character. But the operation of so active a cause has not been confined within the limits of this island. In consequence of the flourishing state of agriculture, and the opulence of the landed and farming interest, compensating the defalcations in manufactures and foreign trade, the British nation has born the burthens of a war dangerous and expensive beyond all precedent. By a liberal and judicious use of her treasures Great Britain has been the support of altars, of thrones, and of social order, and the animating soul of all Europe.

Agriculture is the firmest basis of the strength of a state, and ought, in every country to be held in the highest esteem, and to receive

the greatest encouragement. It is the surest and the most permanent source of wealth, and its extension is the easiest and safest of conquests. "The tillage of land, before waste and uncultivated, is, in every point of view, an acquisition of territory highly beneficial. Unlike distant colonies which furnish a perpetual pretext for hostility, lands newly cultivated excite no jealousy in the neighbouring states, and can furnish no grounds for those frequent wars which are the severest scourge of mankind, and disgrace the professors of a religion founded for the express purpose of disseminating benevolence and establishing peace."* The products of agriculture and not the precious metals constitute the real opulence of a state. In those countries which are the richest in mines, even in Mexico, Peru, Brasil, and Golconda, the produce of the soil, in a moderate state of cultivation, is of far greater value than all the gold, silver, and diamonds that can be dug out of the earth.

In almost every country, the persons engaged in husbandry constitute the majority of the population; and it may always be observed, that where agriculture flourishes, the peasantry are industrious and orderly. It seldom happens that rebellions or dangerous

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* Kett's Elements, vol. 2, p. 332.

commotions originate among the yeomanry, the farmers, or the labourers : the two first classes are inured to peaceful habits ; and they have always a great influence over those of the lowest order, who are domiciliated among them, who are dependent on them for their subsistence, and are too widely dispersed to be easily collected in any formidable numbers. An industrious and enlightened peasantry is one of the chief supports of a state, and forms no inconsiderable feature in the character of a nation.

Commerce was neglected by the Greeks and despised by the Romans ; but it was early practised by the Phœnicians, the Arabians, and, in all probability, by the Egyptians and the Babylonians. The Phœnicians, seated on a narrow shred of land, extending along the coast of the Levant or Mediterranean sea, were induced, by their situation, to search for those advantages from commerce which they could not derive from the scanty produce of their confined territory. These nations being situated nearly in the centre of the old continent, formed the principal link of communication between the eastern and western countries ; and Dr. Vincent supposes the Arabians to have been the first carriers both by land and by sea.* From analogy, from the

* Dr. Vincent's *Periplus*, part 2. p. 434. The Midianites who brought Joseph into Egypt, were an Arabian tribe. See Gen. chap. 37.

recorded magnificence of Nineveh and Babylon, and from the ruins of Thebes still remaining, there is reason to suppose, that the wealth and power of those celebrated cities were, in a great measure, owing to a participation in the oriental commerce; and that the Arabians were the principal carriers.* The Egyptians and the Hindoos had a superstitious aversion to a seafaring life, which, indeed, was incompatible with many of their religious doctrines and practices. But the Arabians had no obstructions to travelling by sea as well as by land, either from manners, laws, or religion; and as there is every requisite proof to shew that the Tyrians and Sidonians were the merchants who first introduced the produce of India to all the nations that encircled the Mediterranean, so there is the strongest evidence that the Tyrians obtained all these commodities from Arabia.†

* From various descriptions of Babylonian magnificence and splendour met with in scripture, that ancient city must have had a very considerable commerce, carried on either by native or foreign merchants. Gold, silver, and various other articles of luxury, which the Babylonians as well as the Egyptians possessed, could be acquired only by conquest or commerce, as they were not found in their own territories.

† Dr. Vincent's *Periplus*, vol. 2. p. 223. The doctor adopting the opinion of Gosselin, considers Arabia Felix as the Ophir mentioned in scripture. The evidence, that Solomon procured gold through the channel of Arabia, appears to be express; and the participation of Hiram, king of Tyre, in this concern was founded in necessity. Solomon's master or Idumea, the Tyrians were cut off from all communication with Arabia, unless they united themselves with the possessor;

The history of commerce is more instructive and entertaining than the history of conquests: it has employed several celebrated pens, and filled several ponderous volumes, without exhausting the subject. In this place it suffices to observe, that no nation or tribe, which had raised itself in the least degree above the state of savages, ever did or ever could exist without some sort of trade however trifling and limited. The Roman citizens regarded it as a disgrace to engage in mercantile concerns; but foreign merchants brought them their commodities, and it is evident that the luxury and splendour of Rome, when mistress of the world, could not have been supplied without an extensive commerce. This was carried on by provincial merchants; and, during several centuries, Alexandria was the principal mart for the supply of Rome with the rich commodities of Africa and the east.

Commerce embellishes cities as agriculture beautifies the country. To commerce, London owes the chief part of her wealth and her splendour, and Amsterdam almost her very existence. To multiply examples would be as easy as it is unnecessary. When we contemplate cities rising out of forests and swamps,

and whatever profit the Hebrew monarch might derive from the import of Indian or African merchandize, the whole of the export to the Mediterranean would be to the exclusive emolument of Tyre.

and displaying all the proud magnificence of trade, the interesting spectacle brings to our minds the beautiful observation of the poet,

“Aurea nunc, olim sylvestribus horrida dumis.”

Virg. *Encid* lib. lib. 8.—344

Commerce, although more precarious than agriculture, is an immense source of opulence: there is reason to believe that London is, at the present day, more wealthy than was ancient Rome, after plundering the world.

By procuring opulence and promoting intelligence, commerce is in the highest degree favourable to freedom. The feudal system fell rapidly before its influence. Commerce, indeed, cannot co-exist with tyranny: the former must flag, or the latter must fall. It also promotes the progress of various arts and sciences. The chief part of our geographical and nautical knowledge owes its origin to commercial views and motives.

Commerce tends in a multiplicity of ways to extinguish barbarism and promote civilization. It weakens or annihilates narrow prejudices, extends the ideas of men, renders them citizens of the world, and inspires them with sentiments of equity. Mercantile men must, in all their transactions, display the strictest probity without which they could not carry on any extensive concerns. They must also have laws which develope every principle of justice, and

the boundaries of right and wrong in cases the most difficult and complex. Without these a commercial community cannot subsist. Accordingly we find that the laws of commercial nations are always remarkable for their complexity, and that merchants surpass most other classes of men in probity. The ancient Ligurians were noted for stratagem, cunning, and duplicity; but these qualities do not constitute any part of the character of their posterity, the modern Genoese. Genoa could not have subsisted so long as a commercial state had not her merchants equalled those of other countries in probity. Great Britain is the most commercial country in the world; and there is none where the fair dealing of merchants, and even of respectable shopkeepers, is more conspicuous.

Manufactures are an important branch of the commercial system; but they are attended with inconveniences which may be regarded as no inconsiderable drawback on its advantages. The assiduous prosecution of manufactures is injurious to the health and often to the morals of a people. This observation, however, is not applicable to every kind of manufacturing employment. The workmen in some kinds of manufactures are as healthful and strong as the gentry or peasantry, although the truth of this position will scarcely be

allowed by writers who, following one another in the same beaten tract, form their opinions from supposition rather than observation. The cotton manufactures, and some others of a similar nature where children are employed may, if not properly managed, be injurious to their health and their growth; and many condemn them as obstacles to the instruction of the rising generation, by putting boys and girls to manual labour, at a period of life which ought to be spent in school education. But it must be considered that the children thus employed are those of the poorest class of people, and such would certainly not receive a better education by remaining with their parents than by being employed in the manufactures.

An eminent writer seems to consider trade and manufactures as hostile to vigour of mind and obstacles to intellectual improvement. "The shrewdness, cunning, and selfishness imputed to the people of Scotland," says Mr Millar, "are merely the unfavourable aspects of that intelligence and sagacity by which they are distinguished above the mechanical

* The author has often observed, that such of the cloth, blanket, &c. manufacturers, as do not confine themselves too closely to the sedentary part of their employment, but reside chiefly in villages, and often carry their manufactures about the country to sell, are remarkably strong and active, and capable of supporting great fatigue.

drudges in the southern part of the island, and by which they are more able to discover their own interest, to extricate themselves from difficulties, and to act upon every occurrence with decision and prudence.”* The same writer asserts, that in all parts of the world the great body of the people, while they remain in a state of rudeness and simplicity, are distinguished by their intelligence, acuteness, and sagacity; and that in proportion to their advancement in commerce and manufactures they become ignorant, narrow minded, and stupid.† The whole of this hypothesis appears to be erroneous, and may easily be confuted by a little inquiry and observation. No persons display greater sagacity in discovering their own interests, or pursue them with greater prudence and activity than the higher class of manufacturers. The workmen, also, those whom Millar calls the mechanical drudges, are at least as acute and intelligent as the lower class of the peasantry of Scotland, or perhaps of any other country.

The working manufacturers are certainly less temperate than the labourers in husbandry, and in times of civil commotions they are also more turbulent and dangerous. Their intemperance proceeds from their being able to earn

* Millar Hist. Eng. Gov. 3—p. 92.

† Millar Hist. Eng. Gov. 3—p. 91.

a great deal of money, and their turbulence from their collection in numerous bodies. The vices of manufacturers are those which naturally arise from a numerous and concentrated population.

Luxury is closely connected with commerce; indeed they are almost inseparable; for without the existence of the former, the latter cannot flourish. If the possessors of wealth contented themselves with the simple necessities of life, money would always remain in the same hands, without any circulation, industry would be annihilated, and the poor would starve. It is the luxury and splendour of the great that supports the lower class of the people. Helvetius very justly observes, "That nothing is more contradictory than the opinions of moralists on the subjects of commerce and luxury. While they agree on the utility and even the necessity of commerce in populous countries, they would, at the same time, introduce an austerity of manners wholly incompatible with its spirit. 'The theatres, actors and actresses, the money which they spend and cause strangers to spend, constitute one of the most lucrative branches of the commerce of Paris.'"* Every thing that occasions a brisk circulation of money, excites industry, and

* Helvetius Treatise on Man, vol. 3. p. 139.

contributes to give animation to the various exertions of human ingenuity. Before the nature of commerce was well understood, sumptuary laws were frequently enacted; but experience and reason has shewn their absurdity. Such laws, indeed, may be beneficial to small and poor states, but they are always detrimental to great and commercial nations, and in these they are now universally abolished.

Historians ascribe the downfall of most of the great empires of antiquity, to the baleful influence of luxury. The greater part of moral and no inconsiderable number of political writers, also consider luxury as essentially destructive of national prosperity.* But on a careful examination it will be found, that the neglect of military discipline, the despotism of their governments, the mismanagement of princes and generals, together with civil dissensions, were the primary causes of the subversion of ancient empires, and that foreign war and invasion commonly gave the finishing blow to their existence. Dr. Smith says, That great nations are never impoverished by private luxury, although they sometimes are by public prodigality and misconduct.

* The ancient fathers unanimously condemned luxury as contrary to the spirit of the christian religion. Vide Clemens Alexandrinus *Pædagog. lib. 3. chap. 8.* Tertull, *de Spectacul. chap. 23.*

The whole, or almost the whole public revenue is, in most countries, employed in maintaining unproductive hands. 'Such,' says this celebrated writer, 'are the persons who compose a numerous and splendid court, a great ecclesiastical establishment, and large fleets and armies, who, in time of war, produce nothing, and in time of peace acquire nothing that can compensate the expence of maintaining them. Such people, as they produce nothing, are all maintained by the product of other men's labours; when multiplied, therefore, to an unnecessary number, they may, in a particular year, consume so great a share of this produce, as not to leave a sufficiency for maintaining the productive labourers who should reproduce it in the next year.'*

But the accurate observer will readily perceive, that here Dr. Smith overstrains his subject. His hypothesis can extend only to the lower orders in the church, the army, and the navy. If the common soldiers and sailors were not in the service of the state, they would certainly be employed in agriculture, mechanical trades, or manufactures, and would consequently increase the number of productive labourers; but Dr. Smith's observations can

* Wealth of Nations, vol. 2, p. 22.

not be applicable to the chief officers of the army and navy, nor to the heads of the hierarchy, who are most of them gentlemen or nobles by birth, and still less to the persons composing a numerous and splendid court. None of these would have been engaged in agriculture, manufactures, or trade. They would have supported themselves on the income of their estates; and if the salaries which they receive be paid by the public, they are, by this means, enabled to live in a higher stile of expence. They consequently return to the nation the sums which they receive, and thus increase the circulation of money, and animate the efforts of industry.

It is certain, however, that the luxury of courts may be carried to a ruinous extent. By oppressing the people it may check instead of promoting industry, and thus contribute to degrade the national character. If it be true that a thousand barbers, a thousand cupbearers, and a thousand cooks were maintained in the court of the emperor Constantius, if one of those barbers, besides a large salary, had a daily allowance for twenty horses, and for the same number of servants, if, in fine, the domestic crowd of the imperial palace was maintained at a greater expence than the legions,* it is no wonder that the empire was

* Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 4, chap. 22. p. 42—43.

beginning to sink into debility, and the character of the people into degradation.

Luxury, whether public or private, contributes to the prosperity of the state, in proportion to the excitement which it gives to industry and ingenuity. In proportion also to its grossness or its refinement, it tends to elevate or to degrade the national character. One of the most useless kinds of luxury, is the maintenance of a great number of idle domestics; it is too much the fashion in several European countries, particularly in Spain and Italy: the most beneficial is that which gives the most employment to labourers, artizans, and manufacturers. In regard to this kind of luxury, money may be expended either in articles which are almost immediately consumed, or in things more durable, such as superb gardens and pleasure grounds, magnificent buildings, fine paintings, and statues. These may be accumulated to an indefinite extent; and after calling into action a large portion of ingenuity and industry, they remain articles of real wealth in the hands of the owner, and a lasting source of national profit. Such was the luxury of the Italian princes and nobles in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and its effects are still conspicuous. Italy, by possessing so many monuments of art, has long commanded the veneration of Europe, and gained millions of

money by the visits of strangers.* Luxury, whenever it takes this direction, not only encourages genius and industry, but refines and embellishes national character.

In the late revolutionary wars, Italy lost many of her master pieces of art, which were carried to Paris, but enough still remained to gratify curiosity and delight taste. At the late peace, however, all or most of the finest pictures and statues were restored to the countries from which they had been pillaged.

CHAP. X.

WAR and MILITARY DISCIPLINE.

WAR is the misfortune and disgrace of human species, and the greatest blemish to the moral system of the world. Since men were collected into political societies, its operations have been almost incessant; and so long as mankind shall exist upon earth, its return will be frequent. It originates from an inexhaustible source,—from the passions and errors of the human race; and unless the nature of man should undergo a total change, hostilities will still continue to tinge the earth with blood. In well regulated communities the disputes of individuals are determined and their passions restrained by laws; when quarrels arise between independent states, there is no supreme tribunal upon earth to which they can appeal: the decision must therefore, be left to the sword, which has been emphatically called “*Ultima ratio regum*,” the last argument of kings.

Successful war has generally obtained the plause of mankind. It has been bedizened with the most magnificent epithets of every language, and has procured for some men the plaudits of the world. The Macedonian Alexander makes a brilliant figure in history ; it is to form that hero, more than a million of men were immolated at the shrine of his ambition ;* and the career of Julius Cæsar is marked by as great a destruction of human life. Notwithstanding the pompous relations of victories and triumphs, it must be considered, that the business of war is destruction and carnage, and that the splendour with which it is emblazoned, resembles the gilding of those hideous idols to whom barbarous nations offered human sacrifices.†

No delusion was ever more pernicious than that which has invested conquerors with a sort of supernatural grandeur, which imposes on the public mind, and tricks the people out with the mock attributes of divinity as if they were justly intitled to the homage of mankind. Such is the folly of men in honouring those dis-

* Burke estimates the number at 1,200,000. Burke's Works, vol. 1. p. 21.

† On the subject of human sacrifices, see an excellent extract from Townsend's character of Moses in Dr. Clarke's notes on the epistle to the Romans, chap. 9. For the description of the magnificent temple of Osiris, in Sweden, and of the image of the god of war, to whom human victims were immolated, see Mallet, vol. 2. p. 147.

turbers of the world with admiration and applause. In perusing with the least degree of attention the annals of the world, we more readily perceive that war is the most prolific of all moral evils, the most direful scourge of the human race, and a source more productive of calamity than famine or pestilence. The illustrious orator, Edmund Burke, computes but certainly with much exaggeration, the carnage made by war and its consequences as seventy times the number of men now upon earth.* On contemplating the ensanguined fields where murderous battles have been fought, the moral philosopher, however he may admire the valour or skill of the combatants, will be ready to exclaim with Catullus,

“Troja nefas, commune sepulchrum Asiæ Europæque :

“Troja virum et virtutum omnium acerba cinis.”

“Accursed Troy of Europe’s sons the grave,
Of Asia’s noblest chiefs the common tomb
Where rest the ashes of the wise and brave.”

or to adopt the language of Lord Byron,

“There shall they rot, ambition’s honoured fools !
Yes, honour decks the turf that wraps their clay !
Vain sophistry, behold in these the tools,
The broken tools that tyrants cast away.”

CHILDE HAROLD

* Vin. Nat. Society Burkes works, I—p. 30. But this computation of Mr. Burke must be a gross exaggeration. Since the deluge no more than 4163 years have elapsed, in which, if we reckon the average of human life at only thirty years, there has not been twice seven generations. Therefore, unless the world had always been as

ut to estimate the horrors of war it is not sufficient to view the field of battle covered with dead: such scenes may be ranked among the least of the calamities which it produces. We must reflect on the many long and lingering deaths occasioned by wounds and disease, by excessive fatigue, by the want of good provisions, by the inclemency of the weather, and by unwholesome encampments: we must consider the desolation of fertile countries, the destruction of flourishing cities, the sufferings of the orphan, the tears of the widow. When we reflect on the miseries inflicted and the happiness prevented by war, we should be astonished that neither the progress of civilization, the reasonings of philosophy, nor the influence of christianity has eradicated an evil of so tremendous a magnitude, if experience did not shew that it is inseparably connected with the nature and circumstances of man.

The promoters and conductors of wars are far from being the most ferocious and cruel of their species. Men delight in war notwithstanding the miseries of which it is productive, because it exercises all the talents and calls forth all the energies of human nature, and gratifies their pride and ambition by holding

peopled as at present, which it would be absurd to suppose, and the half of every generation had perished by war and its consequences, Mr. Burke's estimate must be erroneous.

them up as conspicuous objects of public attention. These motives, however, will not justify their conduct in the sight of the common father of mankind. If nations adhered to the principles of equity and the precepts of the christian religion, few political quarrels would arise that might not be adjusted without drawing the sword. War almost always implies enormous guilt either on one side or the other; it can never be justifiable unless undertaken for the defence of national rights; and a dreadful responsibility rests on the heads of those who commence hostilities from sinister motives.

But the moral philosopher who takes an extensive survey of human circumstances will find some difficulty in adopting the opinion of two celebrated writers, who involve in the same responsibility subjects and soldiers as well as the rulers of states and the commanders of armies. Grotius, speaking of subjects, says that "If they be required to take arms which frequently happens, and it appears to them that the cause of the war is unjust, they ought absolutely to refuse."* With this doctrine of Grotius Mr. Gisborne's opinion perfectly coincides. He asserts that if a person were required "to serve against a foreign state in a

* "Si edicatur ut militent quod fieri solet, si quidem constat ipsam injustam esse belli causam, abstinere omnino debent." Grotii de jure belli et pacis, lib. 2—cap. 26.

war which, in his conscience, he firmly believed to be unjust, he ought to remember that neither the command of his superiors nor even the unanimous voice of his countrymen would justify his obedience."* This doctrine, how plausible soever it may appear in theory, would be dangerous in practice, and lead to many disorders. Peace and war depend on the will of human societies, and that will is the source of all political and legislative regulations. How far men are bound to comply with their public obligations when they clash with their private duties may sometimes appear a difficult question. In the case of a subject engaging in war, the problem will be the most easily solved by considering the comparative certainty and uncertainty of public and private duties when they come into opposition, and the liberty of choice that is left to the agent. Amidst the endless combinations of political affairs, and the contradictory declarations, pretensions, and manifestos of statesmen, of persons who, from their habits of office and their opportunities of information, ought, in these matters, to be the most competent judges, and all of whom assert, in the presence of God and of the world, the justice of their cause, it is absolutely impossible to men of ordinary capacity or knowledge, and often difficult to those of the greatest abilities

* Gisb. Inquiry, 1—ch. 4.

and most extensive survey, to pronounce a right decision in many, perhaps, in most cases. But if the difficulty of deciding on the justice or injustice of a war be so great, obedience to the laws of the state, of which we are members and from which we receive protection, is a duty so obvious that, in affairs merely temporal, it can never admit of any doubt. Unless this fundamental principle be established, all laws must be nugatory and all government must sink into anarchy. So far therefore as the laws of his country command, either in civil or military matters, the subject is bound to obey—where they are silent, his conduct is left to his own discretion and choice. If the laws of the state require a certain proportion of the people to arm, an individual, on whom the lot falls, is not to consider whether the war be just or unjust: his obvious duty is to perform the part of a soldier. But if a person be left to his choice, he ought, before he engages in war, to examine, as far as his means of information allow, the justice of the cause in which he is going to fight, and regulate his decision according to the dictates of his conscience, otherwise he cannot stand acquitted of murder before the tribunal of that supreme judge who has declared, that “at the hand of every man’s brother he will require the life of man.”*

* Gen. chap. 9th, v. 5th, 6th.

It has been observed, that were England again divided as under the heptarchy, the inhabitants of Kent might be called on to slaughter those of Essex; and from this it is inferred, that right and wrong must be estimated by a more steady criterion than the changeable standards of human societies. The circumstance here supposed, indicates the unhappy condition of a country divided into a number of petty states: but has no relation to the justice or injustice of political contests. The British channel and the Pyrennees are not boundaries in morals, any more than the Thames; and if the heptarchy yet existed, the people of Kent might, with as much justice, cut the throats of the people of Essex, as the inhabitants of France can slaughter those of England or Spain. In order to form just estimates of things, we must reason without passion or prejudice—without giving way to feelings excited by present circumstances. The world has long been accustomed to admire the heroic patriotism of Greece and Rome; but we must recollect that, excepting the Persian wars, and some expeditions to Sicily, the heroism of the Greeks, and also of the Romans, during the first ages of their political existence, was exercised solely in butchering their nearest neighbours. Neither Attica, Laconia, nor any other of the Grecian

states comprised so much territory as some of the English counties. The dominions of Rome were, for a long time, still more contracted, and nearly four centuries after her foundation, did not equal, in extent, several of the kingdoms of the Saxon heptarchy.

War, unless when absolutely necessary for the maintenance of national rights, is the greatest solecism in politics. "It is impossible," says Mr. Young, "to view such admirable works as the quay of Barcelona, without regretting the enormous sums wasted in war and bloodshed. No quarrel happens between two nations without costing twenty such quays, a thousand miles of magnificent road, a hundred bridges, the pavements, lights, fountains, palaces, and public ornaments of fifty cities."

* * * * *

A very little calculation would shew that the expence of our three last wars, which had no effect whatever than to spill blood and fill gazettes, would have made the whole island of Great Britain a garden, its whole coast a quay, and have converted all the houses of her towns into palaces, and her cottages into houses."*

These reflections are calculated to make a strong impression: they merit attention, and require some comment. It must be observed,

* Young's Travels, July 17, 1787.

that imperious circumstances too often render war a measure of necessity. Preservation is as requisite as acquisition. It would be useless to construct these quays, roads, bridges, &c. without endeavouring to secure the possession, and unfortunately this can be effected only by arms. Such is the state of things in this world, that if any nation should disclaim all resistance to hostile aggression, its magnificence, its wealth, and all its advantages would only contribute to render it a more tempting object to a warlike and ambitious neighbour. This is a conclusion which may be drawn from all that is known of human affairs,—from the history of mankind in all ages. It must, indeed, be allowed, that if men were invariably guided by the principles of justice, reason, and religion, wars might be avoided; but if such were the case, laws would scarcely be necessary. The disputes arising from ignorance and unavoidable mistakes, the natural effects of human weakness and imperfection, would, in public affairs, be almost always terminated without bloodshed, and in private concerns without litigation. Mr. Young's observations, however, merit the attention not only of princes and ministers, but also of the people of every country. Historians and moralists have adopted the fashion of attributing the calamities of war to the ambition of kings; but they may,

perhaps, be oftener ascribed to the interested views of subjects. Mr. Young himself gives an instance of the eagerness of the democratic class for war, when it seems to favour their interests. At Lisle, and several other places in France and Flanders, he found the people, at the commencement of the revolution, clamorous for a war with England, because they apprehended that the commercial treaty then existing, would ruin their manufactures. "These people," says Mr. Young, "have the true monopolizing ideas: they would involve twenty-four millions of people in the certain miseries of war, rather than see the interest of those who consume fabrics, preferred to the interests of those who make them."*

In all countries, whether the government be free or despotic, some regard is paid to public opinion. Few wars have ever been long carried on without the approbation of the people. Even in Turkey the government turns its thoughts towards peace, when the continuance of hostilities becomes unpopular at Constantinople. A war was seldom proposed by the senates of Athens, Lacedæmon, or Rome, without meeting with the ready approbation of the people.† No reader of history is ignorant

* Young's Travels in France, p. 69.

† Thucydides notices the eagerness of the people both of Attica and of the Peloponnesus to commence that war which proved so detrimental to Greece. Thucydides Bell. Peloponnes. lib. 2. chap. 8.

f the ardour displayed by the English in their attempts to place Edward III. and Henry V. on the throne of France. The undertaking was not less impolitic than impracticable, as its success must have reduced England to the condition of a French province ; yet oceans of blood were spilt in the contest. So strangely, indeed, were the people of England fascinated by this absurd project, that all the disasters of the reign of Henry VI. could not cure them of their infatuation ; and the succeeding monarchs, Edward IV. Henry VII. and Henry VIII. could never devise a readier or more effectual expedient for procuring money from their subjects, than that of pretending to make preparations for the conquest of France. History also shews, that monarchical governments have not been more addicted to war than republics. Moralists may, therefore, cease to declaim against the ambition of kings, when they reflect on the madness of nations.

It would be absurd to ascribe to any particular class of men, rather than to the depravity of human nature, and the difficulty of human circumstances, the existence of so deplorable an evil. Man is a restless animal : the first man that was born killed the second ; and war seems to be congenial to the nature and circumstances of his present condition. It appears, indeed, to be one of the wise dispensa-

tions of providence which ordains, that the inordinate passions of man should produce their own punishment. The grand principle of the divine government is the amelioration of the state of mankind ; but the developement of this fundamental law, is a most awful mystery, which darkens our view of the moral economy of the world. In our present state of existence, we are no better judges of the reasons for which evils are permitted by the ruler of the universe, than a child is of the propriety of correction by the hand of an affectionate parent.

In taking an extensive view of the moral system, we shall perceive that the causes of war may, in a great measure, be traced to two very opposite propensities of human nature : mischievous idleness, and a restless activity. How paradoxical soever it may appear, it is certain that idleness, not that kind of idleness which consists in absolute inaction, but that which is opposite to steady and persevering industry, is often a secret cause of great effects. Mankind in general are more or less addicted to this kind of idleness, as may be observed in all savage or barbarian tribes ; and, although in civilized nations, this propensity may be strongly counteracted by views of interest and the power of habit, yet, in every country, great numbers of men prefer the hardships and

angers of a military life, to the steady exertions of labour in agricultural, mechanical, or manufacturing employments. This is evident from the consideration, that in every country where the trumpet has been sounded for war, an army has been speedily collected. The author of the "Wealth of Nations" ascribes to a different cause, the readiness with which the lower class of people engage in a military life. "What a common soldier may lose," says he, "is obvious enough. Without regarding the danger, however, young volunteers ever enlist so readily as at the beginning of war; and although they have scarcely any chance of preferment, they figure to themselves, in their youthful fancies, a thousand occasions of acquiring honour and distinction, which never occur. These romantic hopes make the whole price of their blood. Their pay is less than that of common labourers; and in actual service, their fatigues are much greater."* But his commentator says, "Mr. Smith is mistaken in attributing the facility with which young men enlist for soldiers to ambition or the hope of good luck. Vanity and laziness are the two passions which chiefly act in this case: the soldier goes cleaner and better dressed than the artisan or labourer: he has

* Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. 1, p. 171, &c.

little to do, and leads an idle life, the hardships of which are concealed.”* A little observation will suffice to shew that this is tolerably just estimate of the motives which most commonly impel men to crowd the ranks of an army. The mirth and jollity of recruiting parties, the power of intoxicating liquors and the animating sounds of martial music also contribute to produce this effect. In the days of youth, when the heart bounds with careless hilarity, the imagination is easily overpowered by gay and splendid illusions. But the love of action and enterprise, and the aversion to steady and persevering industry which are the usual characteristics of this period of life, are the principal causes that drive men from their homes and peaceful occupations into the ensanguined field, “Where thousands fall to deck one single name.” The ranks of an army would be slowly filled but for those who are induced to engage in war by rapturous anticipations of honours and distinction.

The mode in which war has been carried on by different nations, constitutes no inconsiderable feature in their character, and the advantages or defects of their military system have had a conspicuous influence on their civil

* Playfair's Note, *ibid.*

umstances. The armies of every nation were at first a militia, consisting of citizens who possessed property sufficient to enable them to defray their own expences in the camp. The citizens of all the Grecian states, served without pay till after the Persian war, and the people of Peloponnesus retained the custom till a much later period. After the second Persian war, the armies of Athens seem to have been mostly composed of mercenary troops, consisting partly of citizens, but partly also of foreigners, and all of them paid by the state. Among the Romans the system of warfare was originally the same as that of the Grecian states. As the territory of Rome was of very narrow extent, the first wars of the Romans being confined to the adjacent neighbourhood, and carried on almost under the walls of the city, the troops could be readily supplied with all that was necessary in such operations. The citizens, therefore, served without pay, and those who were destitute of property, and consequently unable to support themselves in war, were excluded the privilege of bearing arms. The siege of Veii, which was of ten years duration, and the unaccustomed hardships of so tedious a war, carried on at a considerable distance from home, rendered it necessary to constitute a regular pay for the soldiery, levied by a just proportion on the property of the

citizens.* At this time, and long afterwards, the duty of a soldier was essentially connected with that of a citizen; and every Roman was liable to ten years of military service previous to his attaining the age of forty-five. At first the armies were recruited from the city of Rome and its territory, afterwards from the adjacent district of Latium, which had been conquered and incorporated with the republic, and of which the inhabitants had been admitted to the rights and duties of Roman citizens. These rights being at length claimed, and obtained by all the people of Italy, necessarily involved the same duties. The armies were then levied from every part of Italy; and at length the populace, excluded by the ancient constitution, were indiscriminately admitted by Marius.† War among the Romans was then converted into a trade. Although during the last years of the republic, and in the flourishing age of the empire, the Roman armies were still, for the most part, commanded by officers of liberal birth and education, the common soldiers, like those of modern Europe, were drawn from the meanest and very frequently from the most profligate of mankind. But the Romans always paid great attention

* Vide Liv. lib. 4 and 5.

† Sallust de Bello Jugurth.

‡ Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 1. cap. 1. p. 15.

to the essential qualifications of age, strength, and stature in their levies of troops ; and they always preferred recruits taken from the laborious employments of husbandmen, carpenters, smiths, &c. to sedentary mechanics.*

Before the invention of gunpowder, bodily strength, courage, and activity, with skill and dexterity in the use of their arms, were the highest qualifications that soldiers could possess. But this skill and dexterity could be acquired only in the same manner as fencing is at present, by practising, not in large bodies, but each man separately under a particular master. In all the republics of ancient Greece, military exercises were an essential part of the education imposed by the state upon every citizen, and indispensably necessary to all who aspired to public employments. In or adjoining to every city, there was a public field, in which the martial youth were taught their various exercises by different masters. In ancient Rome, the exercises of the *campus martius* were of the same nature and answered the same purpose as those of the *gymnasia* in the cities of Greece.

The severe discipline of the Spartans has already been described : that of the Roman armies was not inferior in rigour. Military ex-

* Vegetius *De Re Militare*, tom. 1. cap. 2—7.

ercises were their unremitted employment. Large sheds were erected in their winter quarters, that their daily exercises might meet with no interruption from the most tempestuous weather; and it was an invariable rule that, in this imitation of war, their arms should be double the weight of those used in real action.* Their exercises comprehended whatever could increase the strength of the body or the activity of the limbs. The soldiers were diligently taught to march, to run, to leap, to swim, to carry heavy burdens, to make various evolutions, and to handle with dexterity every species of arms. The greatest of their generals encouraged these military exercises by their presence and example; and the emperors Trajan and Adrian frequently condescended to instruct the inexperienced soldiers, to reward the diligent, and sometimes to dispute with them the prize of superior strength and dexterity.† In their marches the Roman soldiers carried with them, besides their arms, their cooking utensils, their instruments of fortification, and provisions for many days. Under this weight, which usually amounted to about sixty pounds for each soldier, they were trained to advance by :

* Vegetius De Re Militare, lib. 1.

† Plutarch Vita Marii et Vita Pompeii—Gibbon Dec. Rom. Empire vol. 1. cap. 1.

regular step, at the rate of about twenty miles in little more than five hours. Active courage may be the gift of nature; but the patient valour of the Romans could be only the effect of discipline and habit. The same discipline would make as good soldiers of the modern Italians.

The number of soldiers which composed the legion, varied at different periods. In the most flourishing state of the empire it consisted of six thousand one hundred infantry, and seven hundred and twenty-six cavalry. In the times of the republic, the cavalry was composed of the principal citizens; but under the emperors it was levied in all the different provinces, and formed of the same class of people as the infantry. Each legion had sixty-five military engines, ten of a large and the rest of a smaller size.* The construction of the Roman legion was superior to that of any other military corps described in ancient history. In order of battle, it was drawn up eight deep, and the regular distance of three feet was left between the files as well as the ranks. The Macedonian phalanx was drawn up in sixteen ranks of long pikes, wedged together in the closest array, and forming an almost impenetrable mass. But when these

* For a description of many of their military machines, see Chevalier de Folard *Observat. sur Polybe*, tom. 2. p. 233, &c.

two formidable bodies came into hostile contact, it was found that the strength of the phalanx was unable to contend with the activity of the legion.*

From this very slight sketch it will be easily perceived, that the Romans made the art of war their principal study ; and history affords indisputable evidence that in its successful practice they surpassed all other nations. These circumstances contributed in no small degree to the formation and support of the Roman character. Every consideration that inspires confidence naturally increases courage ; and this cause operated on the Roman mind with a force which it cannot possess among other nations. Montesquieu very justly observes that in the battles of modern times, the confidence of each individual can only be placed in the military qualities of the whole mass ; but that every Roman, being more robust and warlike than his enemy, relied on his own prowess as well as on that of his companions in arms. From this cause it proceeded that all the Romans possessed that kind of courage which naturally arises from a consciousness of

* For a detailed account of the Roman discipline, arms, military engines, evolutions, encampments, and every particular relating to their system of warfare, see Vegetius *De Re Militari*—Polybius, lib. 6—1—Academie des Inscriptions, tom. 35. p. 262, &c —Lipsius *De Militia Romana*—Josephus *de Bello Judaico*, lib. 3—Folard's *Observations* on Polyb.—and Gibbon *Dec. Rom. Emp.* vol. 1. cap. 1.

superiority in martial qualifications.* But the invention of gunpowder, with the use of fire arms and especially of artillery, has operated a total revolution in the art of war; and the science of tactics is now so universally known throughout Europe, that none of the nations in this quarter of the globe can, for any great length of time, pretend to a decided superiority in courage or skill. Temporary causes may render some of them less warlike than others; but strict discipline soon brings them to an equality. The Portuguese, who were accounted the worst soldiers in Europe, became, when conducted by British officers, scarcely inferior to the troops of England and France.† The Italians and Poles, in the service of Napoleon, equalled the French in the day of battle, and in all the operations of war. And if Italy were united, as in the time of the Romans, her armies might easily be rendered as formidable as those of France and Germany.

The perfection of the military art has a natural tendency to increase the courage of soldiers. That army which has the greatest confidence in the effects of its own discipline, possesses a decided advantage over an enemy who is deficient in a matter so essential. If

* Montesquieu *Grand. et Decadence des Romains*, cap. 2.

† See the Duke of Wellington's dispatches on various occasions, and the reports of other British generals in the late war.

the individuals, of whom it is composed, have not that consciousness of personal superiority over their oponents, by which the Romans were so eminently distinguished, they have at least a well-grounded confidence in the effective strength of the whole mass and the military skill of the commanders. The consciousness of their own superiority in discipline, weapons, and tactics, encouraged small bodies of Spaniards to undertake the conquests of Mexico and Peru; and the same sentiment, united with an enthusiasm prompted by avarice, supporting them under all the hardships and difficulties of these arduous enterprises, rendered them an overmatch for the immense population of these two empires. But amongst the numerous instances that might be adduced to illustrate this argument, none is more appropriate than the conduct of the British seamen. Conscious of their superiority, and accustomed to victory, they seldom hesitate to attack an enemy whatever may be his forces, and their well-grounded confidence renders them invincible. The case was for some time the same with the French armies under Napoleon.

It may seem a melancholy reflection that from the earliest periods of history, the inventive powers of men have been employed in improving the art of murder. But if the

turbulent passions of men render wars unavoidable; it is to every nation an important concern, that its military operations should be carried on in the most effective manner that is possible. Improvements in the tactical art, far from tending to the destruction of the human species, have been in no small degree conducive to its preservation: when wars were carried on without skill, a battle was generally a downright massacre; and undisciplined nations lavished their blood to no purpose. Herodotus in describing the battle of Platea says, that in courage and strength the Persians were not inferior to the Greeks, but they were ill armed and little skilled in discipline.* The Grecian spear, long and weighty, was greatly superior to that of the Asiatics, which was short and light; and the firm body of the Grecian phalanx, although inferior in activity, and in the facility of its evolutions to the Roman legion, could resist the most impetuous shock of cavalry. The strong corslets, the greaves of brass, and the massy buckler of the Greeks, were also far superior to the defensive armour of the Persians.† This inferiority in discipline, weapons, and tactics, was the principal cause of the bloody defeats which the

* Herodot. lib. 9—cap. 61. For the rude manner in which the Greeks and Trojans made war, see Homer's *Iliad*.

† Potter *Archæologia*, B. 3—ch. 4, &c.

Persians sustained in the battles of Marathon and Platea, and a century and a half afterwards at Issus and Arbela.*

The improvements in the art of war have been always preceded or immediately followed by a corresponding change in the human character. Since the invention of gunpowder and fire-arms, war, although become far more expensive, is carried on with less cruelty ; and battles are in general less bloody than they were before that event. The most sanguinary conflicts that have taken place since the French revolution, cannot, in respect of carnage, bear any comparison with those of Platea, Cannæ, and numbers of others recorded in history. The study of war as a science has tended to humanise the minds of warriors, and the improvements made in the practice appears to have had a similar effect on the character of nations and on the circumstances of the world,

Amongst the most important ameliorations of the military system, is that of keeping standing armies, and making war a particular profession, instead of imposing it as a duty on every citizen, as was the practice of the ancients. In consequence of this happy

* For the battles of Marathon and Platea, see Plutarch Vita, Miltiad. Vita Pausan, Herodot. lib. 9. For the battles of Issus and Arbela see Plutarch, Vita Alexandri, Quint. Curtius, &c.

change, wars are carried on by men regularly trained to the profession of soldiers; and those who have no relish for a military life, or whose private circumstances would render it inconvenient, are left to their peaceful employments and feel little of the effects of hostility except in the increase of taxes or the payment of contributions. By this regulation agriculture and trade suffer less interruption; and the state is more effectually served than it would be by compulsory levies. "The closeness, the regularity, and quickness of their movements, the unreserved, instantaneous, and almost mechanical obedience to orders, the sense of personal honour, and the familiarity with danger, which belong to a disciplined veteran and embodied soldiery, give such firmness and intrepidity to their approach, such weight and execution to their attack, as are not to be withstood by those ranks of occasional and newly levied troops, who are liable, by their inexperience, to disorder and confusion, and in whom fear is constantly augmented by novelty and surprise."*

The judicious author of "Moral and Political Philosophy," while he acknowledges that a standing army is the cheapest and the most effective military force, considers it as un-

* Paley's moral and polit. philos. vol. 2, p. 472.

favourable to civil liberty.* But English history refutes this supposition. England has enjoyed a far greater degree of liberty since she maintained a standing army, than she ever possessed when her military force consisted of feudal levies. No country has ever been completely civilized till it maintained a standing army. The improvements of Peter the Great and the progress of civilization in Russia, are chiefly owing to this establishment. It is the instrument which maintains all other regulations.

But if the nature of human affairs render military establishments requisite for the preservation of social order, war is not, for that reason, the less to be deprecated. In national contests both sides are generally losers. The prosperity and opulence of nations arise from agriculture and commerce, rather than from conquest. While the armies of Napoleon were over running and subjugating the continent the wealth of France was exhausted, and her population dreadfully diminished.† “War;

* Paley's Moral and Polit. Philos. vol. 2. p. 479.

† “It has,” says Gibbon, “been calculated by the ablest politicians that no state, without being soon exhausted, can maintain above the hundredth part of its members in arms and idleness.” Dec. of Rome Emp. vol. 1, ch. 5—p. 167. Dr. Ad. Smith also makes the same calculation, and says, that not more than that proportion of the inhabitants of a civilized country can be employed as soldiers without ruin to the state. “Wealth of nations,” vol. 3—p. 51, 52. France, however, had for a long time about the thirtieth part and Great Britain above the

says Mr. Bruce, "disperses wealth in the very instant that it acquires it; but commerce, well regulated, constantly and honestly supported, carried on with economy and punctuality, is the only thing that ever did enrich extensive kingdoms; and one hundred hands employed at the loom, will bring to a nation more riches and abundance than ten thousand bearing spears and shields."* And a moral writer of eminence, M. de Luc, of Geneva, comparing the horrible effects of war with the benefits arising from agricultural improvements, exclaims, "May the regret for the loss of so much possible good be joined to that of seeing so much actual evil."† "If nations," says he, "would once adopt this way of thinking, a vast field would be opened to that activity of the human mind which, from the turn that it has taken, is become the source of our calamities." It is certain, indeed, that internal improvements are far more valuable than foreign conquests, and that the advancement of agriculture and commerce, of literature and science, might afford sufficient exercise for all the genius and talents of states-

fortieth part of their whole population in arms: about a fiftieth part of the people of Austria were sometimes employed in the same manner during the wars that arose from the French revolution.

* Bruce's Travels, vol. 1. p. 367.

† "Puisse le regret de perdre tant de biens possibles s'ajouter à celui de voir tant de maux." Lett. sur l'Hist. de la terre, tom. 5. p. 21.

men, and all the active industry of nations. Armies must be considered not only as instruments of destruction, but as bad schools of morals, and both human circumstances and human character would be greatly ameliorated if swords were beat into ploughshares, and hostilities for ever extinguished. But since wars are the natural result of the depravity of man, and appear to be inseparable from his present condition, the state of the military system, in every country, merits the attention of both politicians and philosophers, as it has no inconsiderable share in moulding the national character. And we ought not to overlook an inestimable advantage arising from the high degree of perfection to which the art of war has been carried by the Europeans. In consequence of their skill in tactics and fortification, the civilized world is guaranteed from the danger of being again overrun by barbarians, as it was in the fifth century.

CHAP. XI.

CURRENT IDEAS and PUBLIC OPINION.

BESIDES the more visible causes of which the operation seems to govern and direct the whole moral machine, there are others of a more latent and less defineable nature that have no inconsiderable influence on its movements. These may be ranged under the general head of current ideas: they arise from an endless complexity of causes, are infinitely varied in their nature, and different in their operations: some of them may be easily traced to their source: of others the origin is difficult to discover: some of them appear to be founded in nature, others are often excited by policy and art; but all of them in every age and in every country are in close connexion with the existing state of society, and their amalgated mass, floating in the minds of a great majority

of individuals, forms what is called public opinion, which may either be directed by reason or led astray by error and delusion. The eternal principles of truth are the same in all ages and climates ; but opinions and prejudices are subject to unceasing variations. They take their form from the pressure of external and adventitious circumstances ; and to estimate their value we must take cool and perspicuous views, without being seduced by the colourings of fancy, the statements of misrepresentation, or those ideal phantoms which hope or fear may conjure up to mislead the judgment.

The most general as well as one of the most permanent of those current ideas is patriotism, or that sentiment which attaches the mind of the individual to the country of which he is a native, to the society of which he is a member. Patriotism, however, is something very different from mere local attachment, although they are often confounded in our ideas, definitions, and estimates. Both, indeed, originate from one common source, which is habit. The child is no sooner capable of distinguishing objects than it conceives an attachment to the persons and things that first present themselves to its notice. For its parents and familiars it imbibes a strong predilection ; and the house in which it is nursed becomes an object of its attachment. These sentiments are in the next

place extended to its playmates, to the streets of the village or town, and to the neighbouring fields the scene of its infantile rambles. In advancing through youth, and in the flourishing period of manhood, social connexions are formed and multiplied. Circles of friends and familiars become united in a community of ideas and feelings, and often of interests: the sphere of human action is gradually enlarged; and the boundaries of local attachment being thus extended, its power is commonly weakened.

The generality of men, however, retain, through life, a sort of particular affection for the place where their early years were spent. The sentiment, indeed, is natural: a man can scarcely contemplate the theatre of his childhood without agreeable reflections on the innocent amusements of that age, so free from care and anxiety: much less can he view the places which were once the scenes of his youth, that brightest period of life, without feeling a lively interest, excited by pleasing recollections. Local attachments arise from these sources: they are originally simple, and lie within narrow limits. By education and habit they are gradually extended; and when their boundaries are marked by language, and manners, and social institutions, they assume the name of patriotism.

The power of this sentiment reconciles mankind to the most uncomfortable situations. Hence arises the happiness of the Laplander, amidst regions of ice and snow: hence all the northern tribes

“ Hug close their mountains and enjoy their storms.”*

It was this passion that made the peasant prefer his humble hamlet to Rome in her full magnificence, and caused the dying warrior to turn his last thoughts towards his “delightful Argos.”

“ Dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.”†

It is native home that gives a relish to the rancid fare of the Greenlander: it is this that enlivens his lingering night, and blunts the rigour of his skies. This sentiment, more than even the toils of slavery, causes the wretched negro to contemplate, with pleasure, the termination of his mortal existence, as a happy return to his native land. In every country, whether savage or civilized, the sentiment is found to exist; and the vulgar of every nation can scarcely think any other part of the world equal to that where they dwell. A late traveller observes, that the Portuguese have the same

* Goldsmith's Traveller.

† “ While expiring he calls to his memory delightful Argos.”—Virgil *Æneid*, lib. 10. But the situation of Argos and the surrounding country is far from being agreeable. And Lord Byron observes that Virgil could not with propriety have used the epithet “dulces” had he not been expressing the sentiments of an Argive. *Childe Harold*, Note 1.

prejudice as other nations, that their country is the finest in the world.* And the people of Cologne, though distinguished by the licentiousness of their morals, consider their city and territory as holy, and the special habitation of saints.†

“ Man thro’ all ages of revolving time,
Unchanging man in every varying clime,
Deems his own land of every land the pride,
Beloved by heaven o’er all the world beside,
His home a spot of earth supremely blest,
A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest.”

Montgomery's Poem on the Abol. of the slave trade.

This sentiment is generally found to be the strongest among semi-barbarous tribes.‡ In more polished nations its operation is less powerfully felt; and especially among those classes whose minds are cultivated and their ideas enlarged by reading and observation. In such minds, however, it is seldom wholly extinct. An English gentleman travelling from Persia to England, having passed the tiresome plains of Mesopotamia, says, “ This day, for the first time since we left England, we saw a wild goldfinch, which settled on a thistle close to our tent. The sight of this little agreeable songster gave us exquisite

* Link's Trav. p. 356.

† Reisbeck's Trav. vol. 3, lett. 57.

‡ Such was the strength of this sentiment among the ancient Germans, that some of them being forcibly removed from their country, terminated their lives by suicide. Mascou, vol. 1. p. 85.

pleasure, owing to the single consideration that birds of this kind were inhabitants of Britain. This thought set before our heated imaginations all those gilded scenes of delight that we supposed were to be found only in that happy region; and which, with wishes bordering on enthusiasm, we were now praying to enjoy. We panted for our mother country, that 'Natale solum' so pathetically described by the poets, and so sensibly felt in every human breast, after a long and painful separation. We could not help looking upon this tuneful goldfinch as a fellow citizen, who had kindly flown thus far to bid us welcome, to raise our drooping spirits, and signify to us that we were drawing nearer to our native country, that land of liberty after which we had so long and so passionately sighed."*

Patriotism, however, is a sentiment of a more elevated nature than mere local attachment: the former consists in a rational sense of duty: the latter arises mechanically from habit, while the understanding is dormant and the will entirely passive. This kind of attachment is consequently weak in cultivated minds, being powerfully counteracted by the love of novelty and the impulse of curiosity. A well informed native of Britain will not

* I've's Journey from Persia to England, p. 351

imagine that this island is the spot on which nature has lavished her choicest favours. In some other countries the soil is more fertile, and a brighter sunshine gilds more genial skies: places may also be found where society presents as many charms. It is not, therefore, on any of these things that his patriotism can rest its foundation, but on a sense of obligation and duty to the country which has always afforded him security and protection. This noble sentiment consists in a firm attachment to the government, the constitution, and laws of his country, from the double consideration of duty and interest; and instead of being weakened, it receives additional force from his visits to foreign nations. By comparison he learns to appreciate the political blessings which his own country enjoys, and becomes more anxious for her welfare and glory. Such was the patriotism of Greece and Rome in the most splendid periods of their history, and such are the sentiments alone which can justly be dignified with that name.

But these refined and elevated notions can scarcely be supposed to exist in any great degree amongst the multitude. In all countries the patriotism of the lower orders is little more than a mere local attachment, which has been pathetically described by Virgil, speaking in the person of Mœnibæus,

"Nos patriæ fines et dulcia linguimus arva
Nos patriam fugimus."*

And Ovid, pouring forth his mournful complaints in the place of his exile, says,

"Et pœna est patria sola carere mea."†

The politicians of Greece and Rome considering a predilection for the natal soil as the original source of patriotism, were careful to strengthen the sentiment by religion, and placed their cities under the protection of tutelary divinities. After Rome had been destroyed by the Gauls, the people were desirous of removing to Veii, and of making that city their capital, but were diverted from their purpose by a speech of Camillus. "Here, in this place," says that magistrate and military commander, "have been preserved the sacred fires of Vesta: here the shields sent down from heaven have been deposited: while you remain in this place you are certain of the protection of the gods."‡ The Roman statesmen used every means to convert the natural but passive sentiment of local attachment into an artificial but active principle of patriotism. The persuasion that their city was founded

* "Round the wide world in banishment we roam,
Forced from our pleasant fields and native home."

† "My greatest misery is that of being exiled from my native land."

OVID TRISTIA.

‡ "Hic Vestæ ignes, hic ancilia cœlo demissa, hic omnes propitii manentibus vobis Dii." Liv. lib. 5. cap. 54.

under the most favourable auspices, that Romulus, after being their king, was become their tutelar deity, that the capitol, of which the name was expressive of dominion, was to be eternal like their city, and their city eternal like its founder, made on the minds of the people an impression which it would be difficult to describe, but of which the effects were conspicuous.

The sentiment of patriotism has always been the strongest in small and semi-civilized states. Among the Greeks, individuals seem to have been almost exclusively considered in their relations to the public. A noble air of patriotism runs through all their moral writings, and the ethics of Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and other Grecian philosophers, are little else than treatises concerning political duties. The "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*"* was the prevailing maxim, and such was the force of its operation, that with the Athenians, the Lacedæmonians, and the Romans, during the early ages of their republics, life did not appear to be the property of individuals, but of the state; and they sacrificed it with the greatest alacrity for the interests and the glory of their country.

The Romans, during the first ages of their republic, were placed in a situation similar to

* "*It is delightful and glorious to die for one's country.*"

that of the Grecian communities. Their territories were small, their domestic life displayed no luxury, and scarcely any elegance: every citizen was a soldier, and had, by office or suffrage, a share in the management of public affairs. The consequence of such a state of society was, that the love of his country was the predominant passion of each individual; the greatness of the Roman name, the object of his pride and enthusiasm: self-preservation, self-interest, all the cares and pleasures of private life, were considered as trifles beneath attention. But this spirit of stern patriotism began to evaporate when diffused through an immense population, like a river diverted into numerous channels, while the introduction of luxury excited a taste for domestic pleasures. The citizenship of Rome being given to all the inhabitants of Italy, and afterwards to all the people of the empire, no longer conferred any distinction; and thus the nation of legislators and warriors was dissolved into the common mass, and confounded with the crowds of servile provincials who had received the name without adopting the spirit of Romans.* The case is somewhat similar in all extensive empires, where the importance of each individual is diminished in proportion to the magnitude of the political mass. Under the Asiatic des-

* Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 1. cap. 7. p. 314.

potisms, which afford no security to the life or the property of the subject, no degree of public spirit can be expected to exist: such governments, indeed, cannot excite any attachment. But even under the milder monarchies of Europe, the majority of the subjects live at so great a distance from the seat of empire, and have so little share in public transactions, that they pay more attention to their private concerns of business or pleasure, than to the affairs of the state. Modern patriotism, therefore, is a sentiment of a much looser texture and less powerful operation than that of the Greeks and Romans, which glowed with so much ardour during the primitive ages of their republics, and excited them to exhibit those prodigies of valour and fortitude which command the admiration of all succeeding ages. The patriotism of the ancients was mixed with a strong degree of enthusiasm, which rendered it capable of producing effects so astonishing. These two sentiments, indeed, are the most powerful of all current ideas, and in every nation, where they exist in any conspicuous degree, their influence on the public mind and character is not to be easily estimated.

Enthusiasm is an ardour of mind, the influence of which on the actions of men is almost incredible, and its effects, until ascertained by experience, are always incalculable. It is an

engine of such prodigious powers that by it the whole moral world may be moved. Such an instrument must, in unskilful or mischievous hands, be exceedingly dangerous; but when dexterously managed and judiciously applied, it is capable of producing not only the most extraordinary but the most beneficial effects. Without its co-operation the patriotism of Greece and Rome would only have been a vague sentiment, an inert principle, unproductive of any thing great or illustrious. Enthusiasm, however, has often led men into such dreadful extravagances, that its name is generally mentioned with contempt or with horror;* but it must be considered that without some degree of this impulse, the hero would not expose his life in battle, nor the sage consume his days in study. Without enthusiasm, letters, sciences, and arts would languish, and nothing that is great could be produced in human affairs.

To some individuals enthusiasm is given by nature: in large bodies of men, such as nations or armies, it is always excited by policy and

* Enthusiasm simply means an extraordinary warmth of imagination or ardour of mind in some particular pursuit, and consequently the word may be taken either in a good or bad sense: in the former sense it is generally acknowledged, that unless the poet, the painter, &c. be an enthusiast in his art he cannot excel. But the bad effects of enthusiasm have often been so terribly conspicuous, that the word is commonly taken in the worse sense.

art, or by a particular train of circumstances ; and its duration is generally transient. Among the Romans a patriotic and military enthusiasm continued longer than in any other nation. It was constantly excited and supported by the civil and religious institutions, as well as by the circumstances of the republic, which, amidst continual wars and repeated triumphs, was almost always in a state of progressive but for a long time of slow aggrandisement. In this state of continual warfare, the military enthusiasm of the Romans had scarcely any time to cool ; and it accordingly remained for several centuries in its full vigour.

The instances of the astonishing effects of enthusiasm, on national character as well as on national circumstances, are numerous and well authenticated. The Arabians, in the first ages of the Caliphate, exhibited one of the most remarkable proofs of its force that can be found in history. At the time of Mahomed's appearance they were divided into a number of small tribes, without military skill or political power. But when the prophet promulgated a new system of religion to the rude and unenlightened Arabians, the propagation of the faith being made one of the conditions of obtaining eternal salvation, was a stimulus too strong to be resisted by an ignorant people ; and the enthusiasm excited by prospects so

novel and brilliant, propelled them with an irresistible force beyond the limits of their native deserts.

In the eye of an impartial observer, the conquests of the Arabians appear far more astonishing than those of the Romans. During the victorious ages of the republic, the Romans almost invariably confined their counsels and arms to a single war, and made it their constant aim to suppress completely one enemy before they provoked the hostility of another. But the enthusiasm of the Arabians disdained these cautious maxims of policy. With the same vigour and success they invaded the empires of Persia and Constantinople, the former of which they totally subdued, the latter they despoiled of several of its finest provinces, and reduced it to little more than half of its former extent. Under the reign of Omar, the second of the Caliphs, which continued only ten years, they reduced to his obedience thirty-six thousand cities and castles, and erected one thousand four hundred mosques. Within eighty-two years after the death of Mahomed, his successors had extended their dominions from the river Indus to the Atlantic ocean, and established an empire little inferior to that which the Romans had acquired in seven centuries. All this was the effect of enthusiasm, founded on religion. Gibbon on

erves, that the Arabians were invincible in fact because they were invincible in opinion.* And it is certain that their first leaders and their troops displayed a desperate valour, of which the most brilliant periods of Greek and Roman glory, afford few examples. But when their enthusiasm began to subside, their immense empire, being first split into parts, became a prey to foreign invaders; and the Arabian nation sunk into its former state of insignificance and obscurity.

In human affairs great weights, as Lord Bacon observes, often hang upon small wires. The greatest events are sometimes the effects of causes apparently trivial; enthusiasm has its source in the natural activity of the human mind: it is a spark which is never totally extinguished; and history shews that the breath of priests or of politicians can easily blow it into a flame. The crusades exhibit the most glorious picture of enthusiasm that is found in the annals of mankind. They were the most interesting transactions of the middle ages, and their effects were as important as the expectations themselves were romantic. Their history has been written by Maimbourg, Michaud, and others: it has been sketched in a masterly manner by Gibbon, and it forms a

* Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 9—c. 51—p. 419.

brilliant episode in the annals of England, France, Italy, and Germany. Like all other narratives of military transactions, it presents to the view horrid scenes of destruction and carnage; but the causes from which these extravagant enterprises originated, and the effects which they produced, display curious and interesting features in the character of human intellect, and the progress of European society.

From the time of the apostles, christians have been accustomed to visit the places that were consecrated to pious veneration by the presence, the preaching, and the sufferings of the redeemer. After Jerusalem and all Judea were wrested from the eastern empire by the successors of Mahomed, the practice still continued, and was permitted and even encouraged by the liberal policy of the Arabian Caliphs. But when the Caliphate, long reeling by intestine divisions, sunk under the pressure of foreign hostility, and the Turks, a ferocious and uncivilized race, became masters of Palestine, the christian pilgrims were exposed to every kind of extortion and insult. This has been long a subject of complaint, and had excited the resentment of the nations of christendom. The project of recovering Jerusalem by arms had been formed by popes and princes; but various circumstances retarded its execution.

nd, perhaps, it might have vanished like many of the airy plans of romantic enterprise, had not the enthusiastic ardour of Peter the hermit roused, in a favourable moment, the zeal and ambition of Europe.

The pilgrimages which have excited the wonder and ridicule of the modern world, although converted, in process of time, to purposes of superstition, originated from associations of ideas, noble in themselves, and natural to the human mind, which is always delighted and often inspired with laudable sentiments in contemplating the places which have once been the theatre of heroic actions or important events.* It appears, indeed, to have been an universal propensity of mankind, in all ages, to venerate the places where philosophers, heroes, and other celebrated personages have been born or have resided, and the sepulchres in which their bones are deposited. Cicero felt all the force of these associations between local objects and distant events, which call forth the latent powers of feeling and intellect. "I know not," says he, "from what principle our emotions arise, in those places where are found the traces of those whom we love or admire. For my part, our

* Sages and heroes who have visited the memorable scenes of ancient wisdom or glory, have confessed the inspiration of the genius of the place, Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 4, cap. 23. p. 101.

celebrated Athens itself does not delight in so much by its magnificent and exquisite works of ancient art, as by the recollection of great men, which is excited by attentively viewing the places where each of them used to dwell where they gave their instructions, where they held their disputations, and the sepulchre where their remains are deposited.”* These recollections, indeed, have a charm peculiar to themselves: under their impression a solemn awe steals over the mind: the passing scene of the world, its noise, its gaiety, and tumult vanish like the baseless fabric of a cloud formed by a castle, of which the turreted battlements are gilded by the rays of the setting sun.

Examples, incalculable in number, and most respectable in regard to authority, might be adduced, to shew that the influence of such associations have been felt by all men of genius and taste. Their effects are remarked by the modern traveller on passing the Granicus, a river celebrated in history.† “What then,” says he, “is this spell of glory? A traveller

* “*Movemur, nescio quo pacto, ipsis locis in quibus eorum qui diligimus aut admiramur sunt vestigia. Me quidem ipsæ illæ Athenæ nostræ non tam operibus magnificis exquisitisque antiquorum artium delectant quam recordatione summorum virorum, ubi quisque habitavit, ubi sedere, ubi disputare solitus sit, studioseque eorum etiam sepulchra contemplor.*” Cicero de Leg. lib. 2.

† The first battle between Alexander and the troops of Darius was fought on the banks of this river. Vide Plutarch Vit. Alexandri.

comes to a river, in which he observes nothing remarkable : he is told that the name of this river is Sousonghirli : he crosses it and pursues his journey. But should some one perchance call out to him “ ’tis the Granicus;”—he starts, opens his astonished eyes, fixes them on the river as if the water possessed a magic power, or as if a supernatural voice were to be heard on its banks. We halted three hours at Sousonghirli ;* and I spent the whole of that time in contemplating the Granicus.”† A judicious and elegant writer describes, in a concise and lively manner, the origin and effects of the associations which rise in the mind on surveying an antique land, re-echoing the voice of ages and the records of history. Alluding to the emotions which the view of the relics of Rome excite in the mind of the spectator, he says, “It is ancient Rome that calls his imagination. It is the country of Cæsar, and Cicero, and Virgil, which is before him. It is the mistress of the world that he sees, and who seems to him to rise again from her tomb, and to give laws to the universe. All that the labours of his youth, or the studies of his maturer age have acquired, with regard to the history of this great people, opens at once upon his imagination, and pre-

* A village bearing the modern name of the river.

† Chateaubriand's *Travels*, vol. 1. p. 305.

sents him with a field of high and solemn imagery, which can never be exhausted. Taa from him these associations,—conceal from him that it is Rome which he sees; and his different would be his emotions.”* And the classical traveller observes that, “Were Rome with all its magnificent edifices and nobility remains annihilated, the seven hills would still be dear to genius and virtue. The pilgrim would still come from distant regions to visit with reverence, the spot on which once stood the first of cities.”†

No traveller, who approaches Avignon neglects to visit Vacluse, which derives its celebrity from the poetical genius of Petrarch; and every lover of letters, views with enthusiasm, the house where he lived, and his tomb in the village of Arquata, near Padua. Mantua is still revered as the native country of Virgil; and the tomb of that celebrated poet at Pausilippo, near Naples, is still an object of high veneration to the literati of every nation. Men of genius yet resort with eager curiosity to Athens, and experience the same emotions as those felt by Cicero, in contemplating the places once honoured by the presence and instructions of men, whose names are an ornament to the pages of history. Here

* Allison on Taste, vol. 1. p. 42.

† Eustace's Classical Tour, vol. 2. p. 160.

ys to himself the enraptured admirer of venerable antiquity, the virtuous Socrates, here the divine Plato, here Aristotle, instructed the Athenians; and here Themistocles, Milvades, Aristides, Conon, Pericles, Demosthenes, and other illustrious commanders and orators, by their eloquent harangues, roused them to acts of valour and patriotism. Under emotions excited by these circumstances of striking coincidence, a single moment seems to concentrate whole ages of human existence. How many persons of genius and taste, impelled by an ardent curiosity and literary enthusiasm, still visit the Troade, traverse it in every direction, and examine every rivulet and hillock, in order to fix the scenes described by Homer, and particularly the site of Illium, although the lapse of near thirty centuries has obliterated every trace of that famous city. What enthusiastic delight do they not feel when they fancy that they have discovered the tombs of Ajax and Achilles on the Sigæan and Riphæan promontories? With what minute accuracy do they not explore the heights of Bonarbashy, and the sources of the Simois and the Scamander? But if any thing connected with the history of past ages be calculated to awaken local enthusiasm, Jerusalem and its environs, are entitled to pre-eminent consideration. If it be esteemed

rational and sentimental to explore, with rapturous veneration, the scenes of the Iliad. Can it be absurd to visit, with pious reverence, the places celebrated in scriptural history. the man of letters feels an exquisite animation in viewing the tombs, real or supposed, of the heroes of Greece or Troy, must not a christian must not a philosopher experience devout emotions on contemplating the place where the mortal part of the Saviour of mankind was once deposited. In viewing the site of Ilium or the remains of Athens and Rome, we contemplate a vast funeral procession which conveys individuals, kingdoms, and empires to the tomb. Jerusalem presents to our recollection a different scene,—a scene unique in the world. It exhibits a memorial of the junction of heaven with earth, of that great event which fixes the magnificent destiny of man :—which instead of exciting lugubrious reflections on the shortness of life, and the instability of human power and splendour, inspires the mind with views beyond the grave, with hopes that extend into eternity.

Such were the associations which first incited christians to visit, with religious veneration, the places distinguished as the theatre of human redemption. These associations were perfectly natural. They had their source in the constitution of the human intellect ; and

the conduct to which they gave rise, did not, in its origin, involve any absurdity.* However we may ridicule the ideas or sentiments of our ancestors, we ought to reflect that many of our prejudices and opinions will appear absurd in the eyes of posterity, and that the well known observation of the poet,

“Manners with fortunes, fashions change with climes,
Tenets with books, and principles with times.”

POPE.

will be verified from age to age as long as this world shall exist.†

But enthusiasm, which, under proper regulations, is the moving spring of all that is great in man, is dangerous when allied with ignorance, or left without the restraint of reason. The pilgrimages to the holy sepulchre, from being used as a stimulus to devotion, and as an expression of gratitude and homage to the redeemer, were, in process of time, considered as propitiations for sin, and as substitutes for

* Pilgrimages are used in false as well as in true religions. Witness those of the Mahomedans to Mecca. Tavernier says, that “Nothing contributes more to keep up the veneration of the Hindoos for their religion, than their frequent pilgrimages to their pagodas. Travels, part 2. b. 3. cap. 13.

† However ridiculous the cruises may appear to the present age, we shall find, on a careful examination of history, that many of the wars, both of ancient and modern times, have risen from motives not less absurd, and from views not less extravagant. They have been not less calamitous to mankind, and their issue very frequently not less contrary to the expectation and aim of their authors and advocates.

moral duties. Popular superstition, seconded by priestly imposture or ignorance, established the fatal delusion which was confirmed by the zeal or the policy of popes and princes. Thus an intellectual impulse, natural to the mind of man, and a sentiment of devotion congenial to the christian character, were changed into religious and afterwards a military enthusiasm which convulsed, during the space of almost two centuries, both Europe and Asia.* “Amidst the universal delirium,” says a modern writer “not a single sage was heard to utter the voice of reason: no one was astonished at what causes our surprise. These scenes, so strange in which all the world acted a part, were to be a spectacle only for posterity.”† This universal delirium, however, at which we now so much wonder, had no inconsiderable influence on the character and circumstances of the nations of christendom.

Every age of the world, from the remotest antiquity to the most recent period, affords instances of the power of enthusiasm, when operating on nations or numerous bodies of men. As its existence is in the imagination, it is oftener created by illusions than by realities. Such was the case with the French nation.

* From A. D. 1996, the time of the first crusade, to 1270 when St. Lewis died before Tunis, in Africa, a period of 174 years.

† Michaud Hist. des Croisades, tom. 1. p. 113, &c.

while, deluded by the name of freedom, under a system of the most horrible despotism. The whole range of human affairs had never before exhibited so novel and imposing a spectacle, as that of revolutionary France, of a country ruled by ephemeral governments, convulsed by profligate factions and civil wars, deluged with native blood, with no regular system of finance, with a paper money incalculable in amount, and in the lowest ebb of depreciation, yet, under all these disadvantages, supporting armies, amounting to more than a million of men, occupying a line of one thousand five hundred miles, from the Adriatic to the mouth of the Ems, and maintaining, with unexampled success, a war against most of the powers of Europe. Such was the power of enthusiasm arising from the illusion of liberty, and which was the more extraordinary as it derived no support from religion, the influence of which was entirely annihilated.* During a crisis when both within and without, the state appeared to be rushing to destruction, not a single indication of despondency was seen; nor amidst the various devolutions of public authority, and the tremendous scenes of internal commotion and carnage, did there seem to

* The French revolution exhibits almost the only instance of great national enthusiasm wholly unconnected with religion, which had always been its basis amongst the Greeks, the Romans, and the Arabians.

be any abatement of the national enthusiasm nor any remission of energy either among the rulers or the people. But after the establishment of the imperial government in the person of Napoleon, the illusion began to vanish. The liberty for which the French had been making so tremendous efforts, was discovered to be only a phantom; and the enthusiasm which it had excited, began to evaporate. Military discipline and tactical skill, the result of that martial system which had been established, insured, for a long time, success to their arms; and repeated victories not only kept up the spirits of the soldiers, but continued to dazzle the eyes of the nation. The liberty of the people was then forgotten in the greatness and glory of the empire. Illusion thus succeeded illusion; but the enthusiasm of the French people had greatly abated, by the frustration of those hopes by which it had been so tremendously excited. When the temerity of their emperor and the chances of war had turned the scale of success, and victory was no longer attached to his standards, the change which had taken place in public opinion, was immediately perceptible. When the allies had crossed the Rhine, they found nothing of that determined resistance which they had so fatally experienced in the commencement of the revolutionary war. They

were opposed only by the armies of Napoleon : they had no longer to contend with a nation in arms ; and the event corresponded with the state of the public mind. In their advances towards Paris, the invaders met with no resistance from the people of France, who seemed to be indifferent to the issue of the contest. The ardour of the French at the commencement of the revolutionary war, when contrasted with their apathy in the last campaign of Napoleon, constitutes a striking feature in the history of national enthusiasm, exhibiting a proof of the facility with which it may be excited, the difficulty of keeping it in its full vigour, and the wonderful effects which it is capable of producing on the national mind and character.

Enthusiasm has the greatest influence on minds which are but partially enlightened. In every country, even in those where civilization has made the greatest progress, the majority of the people are only arrived at that stage of improvement in which barbarism and ignorance, partially dispelled, allow full play to the passions, no longer kept torpid by the want of a stimulus. The multitude is a body quite different from the few who, from education or experience, sound judgment, accurate observation, and deep reflection, are able to compare, to discriminate, and to appreciate.

Those nations, therefore, in which the ignorant and vulgar bear the greatest proportion to the whole population, are the most easily roused to enthusiasm, and the most powerfully influenced by its operation.

This is precisely the case of the Russians, of whom it will be honourably recorded in the annals of the nineteenth century, that with a courage and energy, of which modern times have furnished few examples, they were the first people on the continent that arrested the victorious career of the French armies, and gave a turn to the fortunes of Europe. But this was accomplished at the expence of sacrifices of which the most patriotic enthusiasm alone was capable. Sir Robert Kerr Porter gives an animated description of the scene in the Russian camp, previous to the battle of Borodino. On the evening preceding the day that was to terminate the existence of forty thousand human beings, the troops were drawn out in front of their formidable enemy; and the commander in chief, Field-Marshal Prince Kutusoff, surrounded by his generals, rode down the ranks, preceded by the holy picture, which, to the great joy of the empire, had been saved from the burning ruins of Smolensk. "On its approach, every head was uncovered: the sacred form of the cross waved on the breasts of thousands along the extended

line, and an awful silence prevailed." They were addressed by their general in a speech characterized by a wild sublimity, calculated to excite the most ardent enthusiasm. "The sacred representations here before you," says he, "call upon heaven to unite with man against the tyrannic troubler of the world. Fear not but that the God whose altars have been insulted, by the worm which his almighty fiat had raised from the dust—fear not but that he will be with you. Soldiers do your part.—Think on the burning sacrifices of your cities—think on your wives and children looking to you for protection—think on your emperor—your lords regarding you as the sinews of their strength—and before the setting of to-morrow's sun, write your faith and your fealty on the field of your country, with the blood of the invader and his legions." This military harangue, which called in the influence of religion to excite an indignant courage in the minds of the hearers, was not without its effect. In the battle of the following day, the Russians bravely withstood the whole force of the French emperor, directed by his consummate skill; and the ensanguined scene drew from him this exclamation, "*Jamais on n'a vu un pareil champ de bataille.*"* But the

* "Never has one seen such a field of battle,"

sacrifices to which the Russians submitted were such as few other nations would have made. Had they been in a higher state of civilization, they would have felt greater reluctance to give up their capital to the flames for the sake of embarrassing the invaders on their country.

To direct public opinion, and render current ideas subservient to the views of the state and the good of society, has always been a principal object with legislators and rulers. The design is judicious, for mind is the invisible agent that governs the world. But as the great bulk of mankind receive stronger impressions from what strikes the senses, than from any thing that should operate on the understanding, a variety of outward forms have been wisely devised, in order to produce the requisite effects on the mind. The splendour of government, the pomp of religious ceremonies, the glitter of military parade, and the sound of martial music are not things of mere ostentation for the gratification of vanity: they have their sources in sound philosophy, in a knowledge of human nature, and are calculated to strike those finer chords of the imagination which give an impulse to thought and action. All these displays of public magnificence have their utility: they impress the multitude with reverence and awe: they feast the eye and the imagination,

and clothe the individual with the dignity and grandeur of the aggregate body.

With the power of this political magic the Romans were well acquainted. Long before luxury was known in their private life, they introduced solemn processions, rich habits, and pompous ceremonies into all the branches of public administration, whether civil, religious, or military. Of the utility of outward forms, both in religion and politics, all mankind seem to be fully sensible. External worship, when attended with pomp and magnificence, elevates the mind, and attaches it to religion.* The vast fabric of the temple, its majestic height and venerable antiquity, the deep gloom and solemn silence, or the blaze of light reflected from numerous lamps, and the awful bursts of the organ, make a powerful impression on the soul. The splendour of the regalia, the pomp of a coronation, all the brilliancy of a court contribute to throw an air of dignity on the person of the monarch, to impress the subject with respect for the government, and strangers with an idea of the grandeur and wealth of the nation. Military standards, martial music, all the pomp and glitter of triumphs, are calculated to excite the enthusiasm of armies and

* Zimmerman prefers the gloom of superstition and the frenzy of fanaticism to the fatal supineness that extinguishes every virtue. *Zim. in Solitude*, p. 252.

nations. The veneration in which the Roman eagles were held by their troops, has already been noticed, and is, indeed, universally known. After christianity was established in the empire, the labarum or cross, inclosing the sacred monogram of the name of Christ, was adopted as the military standard by Constantine and his successors, with a view of inspiring the soldiers with courage through the influence of religion. The Danish raven, an appropriate symbol of the gloomy and ferocious disposition of the Scandinavian warriors, was chosen by them for their standard, as the eagles had been by the Romans, and was held in nearly the same veneration. All the nations of modern Europe have their military standards consecrated by the ceremonies of religion. All governments deem it expedient to animate the spirits of their soldiers and subjects by military spectacles. It would scarcely have been possible to behold the pompous magnificence of a Roman triumph without feeling a glow of martial enthusiasm. All these things it may be said are illusions. But it is such illusions that have produced most of the great and astonishing effects which have given a striking brilliancy to the annals of the world. All human life is a scenic representation. The great majority of mankind, incapable of making accurate calculations, act under the

influence of various delusions; and from their impression on the imagination the most exalted heroism often derives its origin.

It is difficult, in some cases, to dispel the clouds that hang over the principles of politics and legislation, which have so great influence on human affairs. "As soon as a victorious system is proclaimed, it rules opinion, tyrannizes over thought: its impression is every where to be found."* Accidental circumstances, or the train of passing events rather than correct views, often give a turn to subjects of investigation, and operate a change in national character. This was, perhaps, more generally the case before the diffusion of learning into the great mass of the people; but even at the present time the same causes exist, although their agency be differently managed. Among the ancients, besides the powers of eloquence, oracles, auguries, and other impostures were employed to sway public opinion, and excite public sentiment. In later ages, the clergy directed the machine of human intellect. And in modern times, venal scribes and political pamphleteers undertake and execute, often with too great success, the important task of seducing the public mind into any track that seems to be convenient for any

* Segur's Hist. Fred. Will. II. vol. 2—p. 54.

particular purpose. Of this, France has, in our times, exhibited an instance never to be forgotten. In the first periods of the revolution, the ears of passengers, in the streets of Paris, were continually stunned by the hawkers of seditious pamphlets and fictitious news which kept the populace in a state of ignorance and alarm. The extraordinary respect of the French for their kings, which had been a prominent feature in the national character, was changed into a republican mania, and their attachment to regular government into a proneness to anarchy. Seditious demagogues and infidel writers overturned the throne and the altar, and nearly eradicated from the minds of the people every notion that had been consecrated by time and religion. After a victorious party had crushed the revolutionary hydra and placed on the throne a new sovereign, the same system of policy continued, although in a different direction.* In the newspapers, the bulletins, the imperial decrees, exposes, &c. every method was used to direct the public mind, that invisible agent on whose operations all power must depend for its stability. It is, indeed, impossible to peruse, with the spirit of impartial investigation, the manifestos and declarations of politicians, filled with state-

* Excellent remarks on public opinion, may be seen in Segur's Hist. Fred. William II, vol. 2. p. 66—72.

nents and reasonings which appear irrefragable till their fallacy is proclaimed by the answers of their opponents, without perceiving that their sole object is to veil their thoughts from the world, and by asserting rather than proving the rectitude of their intentions to bring public opinion to their side, and direct it to their purpose. Of this, the conduct of Napoleon, who, amidst all his vast projects of conquest, never commenced a war without professing an ardent desire of peace, exhibits a notorious and recent example. Such assertions are, in every country, readily believed by the great mass of the people, who are often deceived by false professions of disinterestedness and patriotism, while behind the scene the political actors laugh at the characters which they play on the stage.

By accurate observation and an attentive perusal of history, we become acquainted with the whole farce and fallacy of life. Men of enlightened minds can alone pierce the veil that conceals the mysterious complexity of human affairs, and the folly of vulgar ideas and opinions: the people, involved in ignorance, are only a passive machine, possessing, indeed, prodigious powers, but requiring a dexterous management. The opinions of the people are the instruments with which politicians must work; and how extravagant

sover they may be, they are, when skilful directed, capable of producing extraordinary effects.

Ignorance aids illusion, and lends to idyls and objects an air of enchantment. An eminent writer observes, that "The correction of one single prejudice has often been attended by consequences more important and extensive, than could be produced by any positive stock of information."* But it is also certain that the establishment of prejudices is often productive of as great effects as could arise from their correction or even their eradication, and that the actions and events which give the most interest to history, as well as to poetry, frequently result from false systems and erroneous ideas in religion, politics, morals, and science.†

Among the politicians of ancient Rome it was invariably held as a maxim, that the people ought to be kept in ignorance of many things that were true, and be made to believe many things that were false. In this, says Augustine, consists the whole art of ruling.

* Dugald Stewart's Philosophical Essays. Prelimin. Dissert. p. 3.

† A false system of religion gave rise to the most splendid works of Grecian art, and the extravagant mythology of the pagans, was the chief embellishment of their poetry. The adventurous attempts of Columbus originated from a geographical error; and the mad policies of the French revolutionists have produced events that will embellish history, and astonish posterity.

mankind.* If, indeed, we carefully examine the whole political system of the Romans, we shall readily perceive that this was a principle in which they invariably acted, and in perusing their history we see its amazing effects. By adhering to this maxim, the leaders of the French revolution established a systematized tyranny unparalleled in the history of the world; and by pursuing a similar line of policy, the imperial government of France had nearly reduced the whole continent of Europe under its dominion. The history of mankind affords innumerable proofs that both the character and circumstances of nations greatly depend on the excitement and direction that are given to current ideas and public opinion.

* St. August. De Civit. Dei. lib. 4. cap. 31.

CHAP. XII.

POLITICAL EVENTS.

THE moral causes which, with their effects have, in the preceding chapters, been brought under consideration, derive their origin, or at least their various modifications from the events which diversify the history of the world. The passions and affections of men are derived from nature : their ideas and opinions are in a great measure the result of accident. Systems of government and of religion, the state of arts, sciences and letters, of agriculture and commerce, every thing that can influence or distinguish the characters of individuals or na-

ions, derives its origin from casual occurrences.

It sometimes happens that sudden emergencies, which can scarcely be brought under any particular class of moral causes, completely counteract and absolutely invalidate the influence of government, religion, education, habit, and all other circumstances which have, in general, the greatest share in forming the characters of men. Dr. Smith remarks this effect in speaking of the decisions and councils of Calcutta and Madras on several critical occasions. "The members," says he, "of these councils had been bred to professions very different from war and politics. But their situation alone, without education, experience, or even example, seems to have formed in them, all at once, the great qualities which it required, and to have inspired them both with abilities and virtues, which they themselves could not know that they possessed."*

The same observation may be made on Oliver Cromwell, and other officers of the parliamentary forces in the civil wars, which so dreadfully desolated England. Few of them had been educated for a military life; and Cromwell himself was near fifty years of age before he became a soldier. The French revolution

* Wealth of Nations 2—p. 529.

displays innumerable instances of consummate abilities and admirable virtues, which were entirely the offspring of an extraordinary crisis. Most of the politicians, and many of the generals of France, at that period, arose from the different departments of the law, of commerce, or from the inferior class of ecclesiastics,—men who had, neither by education, nor habit, been trained to the part which they were called to act.* Many victims of the revolution exhibited instances not only of loyalty and of filial and parental affection, but also of fortitude and pious resignation, of which they had scarcely thought themselves capable. The history of the world affords numerous instances of critical emergencies and particular combinations of circumstances calling into exercise and activity the latent sparks of genius, of courage, and other high qualities, which otherwise might for ever have lain dormant.

It is a common and a well founded observation that the views of men expand with exigencies, opportunities, and success. An elegant writer seems to suppose that an individual, when his sphere of action becomes more extended, may pursue on a large scale the same

* Of the Marshals of France who made so brilliant a figure in the campaigns of Napoleon, fourteen had either emerged from the ranks or risen from low employments.

line of conduct that he does on a smaller. "What," says he, "has the politician to do but to apply to the affairs of nations and the intercourse between states, those principles of morality which he finds in the relations of private life."* This, however, is neither common nor easy. The statesman, in turbulent times, is encompassed by quicksands and whirlpools, which it is scarcely possible to avoid. In acting on a widely extended scale he cannot attend to minutiae: circumstances arise which no human sagacity could foresee, and place him in situations in which the experience of private life cannot furnish him with any lessons of instruction or any rules for his conduct. Dissimulation, so odious in private life, is often extremely necessary to those who are surrounded with the dangers and difficulties of a public station: it even becomes a virtue when directed to the promotion of national safety, tranquillity, and happiness. Gibbon, in speaking of politicians, observes that, "As it is impossible for the most able statesman to subdue millions of followers and enemies by his own personal strength, the world under the name of policy seems to have granted them a liberal indulgence of craft and dissimulation."† It

* Mr. Roscoe's Letter on Reform, p. 11, &c.

† Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. 1. cap. 5. p. 189.

is, indeed, the very essence of policy to conceal those profound designs on the successful issue of which the prosperity of nations depends, as it would be the height of imprudence to make the multitude acquainted with the secrets of the state. Oliver Cromwell does not seem to have been tinctured in private life with any of that hyprocrisy which marked his character after his appearance on the public theatre. Several of the principal actors in the French revolution, men whose names are now remembered with horror, had not before that unhappy period shewed any ferocity of disposition. The history of human affairs shews that characters are formed by circumstances. The man who would shudder at the thought of shedding the blood of an enemy, can, when placed at the head of an army, survey the field strewn with dead without any painful emotions. And he who in private life had always been mild, unassuming, and devoid of ambition, often becomes severe, haughty, and aspiring in the conduct of public affairs, the state of the times, and the exigencies of his situation, imposing upon him this dire necessity.

The character of nations, like that of individuals, changes with their circumstances. The moral like the physical world presents a perpetual revolution. It is never in a state of

repose, and many of the changes by which it is agitated spring from causes more trivial than some would imagine. "In morals, as well as in physics," says Helvetius, "we are struck by the great alone: we constantly assign great causes to great effects: we would make the signs in the Zodiac announce the fall or revolutions of empires. Yet how many cruises have been undertaken or suspended; how many revolutions accomplished or prevented; how many wars kindled or extinguished by the intrigues of a priest, a woman, or a minister."* The events which originate from such causes are frequently called accidental; but we must always keep in view this great truth, that an all-ruling Providence directs the eternal and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects which runs through the whole history of human existence, and that nothing can be the effect of mere accident or chance.

The history of man, of nations, of their social circumstances in past and present times, and of the events by which these circumstances have been determined, is the source of all moral knowledge. With the nations that flourished before the Greeks, we are but little acquainted: their laws, their literature, their arts, and their sciences, are buried in the oblivion of

* Helvetius's Treatise on Man, 1. p. 34.

ages, and their history is too obscure and defective to afford much information respecting their social systems. A partial exception may be made in regard to the Egyptians and the Jews: of the former of these nations, stupendous monuments yet remain as evidences of their arts and their opulence; and we know that the primitive philosophers of Greece went into Egypt for instruction: the latter are known to us both by their history and law, which form the basis of our religious and moral ideas. The history of the Israelities is clear and distinct, and their sacred writings are universally disseminated, that of the Egyptians, transmitted to us by Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, is too romantic and uncertain to command much attention.* Not a single monument of the literature of the ancient Egyptians now exists. It is in Greece that we begin distinctly to trace the progressive illumination of intellect.

Athens diffused letters, philosophy, and arts throughout Europe. The Greeks were the instructors of their Roman conquerors; and the causes which led to their degradation

* Herodotus compiled his history from the relations of the Egyptian priests, above a hundred years after their country had been reduced under the dominion of Persia, and they would undoubtedly endeavour to enhance the ancient glory of their nation, by imposing many romantic tales on the credulity of a foreigner. Diodorus Siculus wrote almost 400 years after Herodotus.

may be traced in their history. The Romans having acquired a knowledge of the arts and sciences from Greece, disseminated them with their conquests. After seven centuries of successful wars, Rome accomplished the subjugation of the then known world. The people of western Asia, enervated by luxury and oppressed by despotism, made only a feeble resistance to her arms; but the transalpine nations of Europe, brave, independent, and uncorrupted by opulence, defended their possessions with an obstinate valour. During the long and fierce struggle for dominion, many countries of Europe were desolated and almost depopulated; but it was the distinguishing characteristic of the Romans, to civilize wherever they conquered. As a compensation for the loss of a barbarous independence, they communicated their arts and sciences, their language and manners, to their new subjects. Colonies of Romans were placed amongst the native inhabitants. New cities were built, agriculture was encouraged, a regular government was established, and the public tranquillity was maintained. All the countries to the south of the Danube, and to the west of the Rhine, assumed a new aspect; and in language, manners, and habits of life, the native inhabitants became Romans. Civilization was thus spread over all these exten-

sive regions: the Romans having embraced christianity, propagated their religion together with their arts; and the human mind received a general illumination, which, although greatly obscured by the dreadful convulsions that accompanied the fall of the empire, could never be wholly extinguished.

This state of prosperity and extensive civilization continued with little interruption during the space of four centuries.* But in the midst of this calm, causes, hostile to its permanence, were silently operating. The vanquished nations had been disarmed by their conquerors; and as Rome had a vast extent of frontier, no less than the whole length of the Rhine and the Danube to defend against the unsubdued nations of northern Europe, she was almost continually engaged in wars; and the provinces were drained of their martial youth to recruit her legions. The independent spirit of their ancestors became extinct among all the people subjected to the Roman yoke; and those warlike nations who had at a former period so long and so obstinately withstood the veteran legions of Rome, commanded by her ablest generals, made only a feeble resistance to the arms of

* This period may very properly be considered as commencing with the christian era, when the temple of Janus was shut by Augustus as a signal of universal peace, and ending at the accession of Honorius.

the Goths, Vandals, Franks, Lombards, and other tribes of barbarians. The oppressive extortions and mismanagement of the imperial administration, the rapacity of its delegates, and the enormous weight of the taxes, excited a general disaffection to the Roman government, and rendered its subjects indifferent spectators of its fall.* Wherever the invaders met with any check to their victorious and devastating career, it was from the Roman legions: none of the historians of the times mention any vigorous resistance made by the inhabitants of the provinces, nor any effectual attempt to organize an army for that purpose.† Thus, without the operation or concurrence of any physical cause, the misconduct of the Roman government, under the emperors, had produced in its subjects a moral degradation, and changed the formerly courageous inhabitants of Gaul, Spain, Illyrium, &c. into a herd of unresisting victims. The legions, although no longer inured to that severe discipline which had rendered them masters of the world, were,

* For the oppressions of the Roman government, see Salvianus de Gubern. Dei 5—Mag. Biblioth. Patrum 90, &c.—Ap. Du Bos, l. p. 333, &c. He says that the people dreaded the tax-gatherers more than foreign enemies, and readily submitted to the barbarians.

† The Britons might here be mentioned as an exception; but it is to be considered, that when they undertook their own defence they had been abandoned by the Romans, and were no longer under their dominion.

in the art of war, still superior to their enemies. but after an ineffectual struggle, and a series of alternate defeats and victories, they at length sunk under the pressure of the numerous hordes of barbarian invaders; and the vast fabric of the Roman empire was totally overturned.

During this period of dreadful contest, the condition of the northern nations was in every respect quite different from that of the Romans. Among them the martial spirit was in its full vigour. Their leaders were hardy and enterprising, and strangers to that luxury which had enervated the courtiers and military commanders of Rome; and the numerous armies which they brought into the field were supported by pillage. In their own country they had no cities, and often no fixed habitations. And preferring the genial climate and cultivated regions of the south, to their own gloomy forests and vast deserts, numerous bodies of armed men, with their wives and children, issued forth in search of new settlements. Those who first fixed their residence in the countries which they had conquered, were expelled or exterminated by new invaders. And this tumult of nations did not cease till the countries to the north of the Danube were drained of their most warlike inhabitants, and those in the southern part of Europe exhibited a scene of desolation.

The subversion of the Roman empire produced the most disastrous change that had ever taken place in this quarter of the globe. During a long succession of ages the civilization of Europe, although advancing by steps exceedingly slow, had constantly been progressive, beginning in Greece, and gradually extending itself first into Italy, and afterwards into Spain, Gaul, and Britain. But at this unhappy period, the regular structure of Roman government was annihilated; and a foundation was laid for that fertile source of anarchy, the feudal system, which held the people of every nation in a state of slavery. The Roman jurisprudence, the noblest monument of the wisdom of a people that for several centuries had ruled the civilized world, was set aside and almost forgotten. And even the christian religion, which some of the northern nations had embraced before, and others soon after they had subverted the empire, was corrupted by a mixture of degrading superstitions.

The scenes of devastation and slaughter, of oppression and anarchy, which accompanied and followed the settlement of the barbarians in their new conquests, were decidedly hostile to the cultivation of intellect. Literary pursuits are the amusements of leisure and prosperity, when the mind, free from external pres-

sure and distraction, can expatiate at ease over the regions of fancy and invention, and cultivate their flowers without fear or interruption. But in the fall of empires, when misery besets every door, and death stares every man in the face, it is natural to turn to objects of greater and more pressing importance. Without the protection of regular government, and the certainty of personal security, men will never make any progress in sciences, arts, or letters; nor think of attaining refinement in taste or in manners. Within less than a century almost all the knowledge and civilization which the Romans had diffused throughout the western empire disappeared; and the human mind, neglected and depressed, sunk into the most deplorable ignorance. "Europe," says a celebrated historian, "did not produce during four centuries one author who merits to be read, either on account of the elegance of his composition, or the justness and novelty of his sentiments. There is hardly one invention, useful or ornamental to society, of which that long period can boast."* A more striking picture of the profound ignorance that prevailed throughout Europe after the subversion of the Roman empire, can scarcely be delineated by the pen of the historian.

* Dr. Robertson Hist. Charles V. vol. 1—p. 22.

Within less than two centuries after this dire revolution in Europe, an event of a similar nature took place in Asia, and in the civilized parts of Africa. The conquests of the Arabians have already been mentioned. They were a more polished and less sanguinary people than the northern barbarians, and the progress of their arms was far less destructive; but like them they were enemies to learning, and their fanaticism inspired them with contempt for intellectual attainments. From the Indus to the Atlantic ocean, the arms and religion of the Moslems carried fanaticism and ignorance in their train. Both the east and the west were, at the same period, ingulphed in barbarism. And Constantinople was the insulated seat of literature and arts.

In Europe, the barbaric inundation swept away almost every remnant of science and civilization. But Dr. Robertson seems to have assigned too great a length of time to the period of total obscurity. It is well known that in the age of Charlemagne there flourished some men of considerable erudition; and every one is acquainted with the efforts of that monarch to rescue letters from the general gloom in which they were involved. These attempts, although seconded by the abilities of several learned men, were indeed like meteors that appear in the night: they cast a momentary

light ; but the darkness returned. The general ignorance was too deeply rooted to be removed by the transient efforts of one single reign. But it is certain that the institutions of Charlemagne contributed, in no small degree, to the restoration of letters in Europe. And although the eclipse of learning continued almost a thousand years, yet the seventh and eighth centuries constitute the period of its greatest obscuration.

While Charlemagne was attempting to procure the revival of letters in Europe, the Arabian Caliph Haroun Al Raschid was labouring for the same purpose in Asia, and with greater success. The northern barbarians of Europe consisted of different nations and tribes, who, after they had settled in the Roman provinces, were in a continual state of hostilities. The conquests of the Caliphs were made by one single people, and during a considerable period their extensive empire was united under one head. The different circumstances of the Arabians and of the nations of Europe will therefore account for the different progress which they made in the sciences. As soon as the Arabians turned their attention to the cultivation of intellect, and their Caliphs gave encouragement to learning, they made very rapid advances ; and the arts of civilization shed a brilliancy over their empire, while

Europe was overshadowed by a dense cloud of ignorance.

The feudal system which was established in Europe, being equally hostile to regal authority and popular liberty, was calculated to keep up a state of anarchy, slavery, and ignorance. The origin of this system is a subject of which the investigation has exercised the pens of many able writers. Montesquieu thinks that its traces may be discovered in the honorary rewards bestowed by the chiefs of ancient Germany on their retainers.* The Abbe Mably is of a different opinion.† Any attempt to decide a question so difficult and obscure would require an accumulation of historical and antiquarian research, which, in this place, would afford but little entertainment or instruction. It may not, indeed, be amiss to observe, that the universal adoption of the feudal system, by all the northern nations after their establishment in their new possessions, if it does not afford a positive proof, at least authorises a strong presumption that the rudiments of it had existed among them in their original seats, and that it was not a new invention, although it undoubtedly received various modifications from the novelty of their circumstances.

* Montesq. *Esprit des Loix*, liv. 3. ch. 30.

† Mably *Observ. sur l'Hist. de France*, tom. 1—p. 356

It may naturally be supposed that on the first appropriation of land, the proprietors were numerous ; and the estates of individuals proportionably small. But in the disorderly times which followed the subversion of the Roman empire, persons of small property were unable to defend their possessions, and for that reason found it necessary to resign their estates into the hands of some powerful neighbour, and to hold them in future as his vassals, on condition of military service.* Such, indeed, was the state of Europe from the fall of the Roman empire till nearly the end of the tenth century, that to use the words of a learned writer, we shall probably not be able to discover a period of its history “in which there is to be found greater license, less order, and less happiness.”† The disorders which had so long prevailed did not cease all at once, but they were gradually diminished, and began finally to disappear after the lapse of some centuries.‡ The introduction of the feudal laws has, by some, been regarded as an attempt to moderate the authority of the great allodial proprietors. It, indeed, established a regular subordination with a long train of services and duties from the sovereign to the

* Millar's Hist. Eng. Gov. 3—p. 21, &c.

† Ward's Inquiry into the laws of nations in Europe, vol. 1. p. 13 .

‡ Ward's Inquiry, vol. 1. p. 244.

lowest vassal; but it proved an ineffectual remedy for the disorders of the times; because it could not alter the state of property and manners from which those evils arose.

There is a certain stage in the progress of society in which the power of the chieftains or lords must naturally receive a gradual augmentation, while the authority of sovereigns and the liberty of the people suffer a proportionable diminution. In this semi-barbarous state the northern nations remained during several centuries after their establishment in the Roman provinces.* In countries which have neither foreign commerce, nor any of the finer manufactures, a great proprietor having nothing for which he can exchange that part of the produce of his lands which remains above the maintenance of the cultivators, consumes it in rustic hospitality. He is therefore at all times surrounded by a crowd of retainers and dependants, who having no equivalent to give for their maintenance, and being fed by his bounty, must obey him for the same reason that soldiers must obey the prince by whom they are paid.† The territorial jurisdiction possessed by the nobles, during the middle ages, did not originate from the feudal laws,

* For the general state of slavery in France in the tenth century, see Montesquieu *Esprit des Loix*, liv. 30.

† Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. 2—p. 125.

but had a prior existence.* Not only the civil and criminal jurisdictions, but the power of levying troops, coining money, and making laws for the government of their own people, were rights enjoyed by the great allodial proprietors of land several centuries before the feudal laws were established. The authority of the Saxon lords in England before the conquest appears to have been as great as that of the Norman barons after that period. And it is a fact of which there is the strongest historical evidence, that the great allodial proprietors in France possessed the most extensive authority and jurisdiction long before the feudal laws were introduced into that country. "That authority and those jurisdictions necessarily flowed from the state of property and manners here described."†

The characteristics of the feudal system were magnificence without taste, profusion without liberality, splendour without comfort, pomp every where contrasted with penury, feeble governments, an illiterate and despotic nobility, and an enslaved people.‡ The various juridical powers of the barons wrested, in many cases, the administration of justice out of the hands of the sovereign; and the right,

* Millar's Hist. Eng. Government, vol. 2—ch. 1—p. 14, &c.

† Smith's Wealth of Nations, ubi supra.

‡ Du Cange Voce Servus Potgiess. De Statu Servorum lib. 2 and 3.

as it was called, of private war, which they possessed, produced the most horrible scenes of anarchy.* In some of the countries of Europe the nobles possessed all the power: the monarchs were mere pageants of state. In the eleventh century the disorders of this system, and the consequent corruption of taste and manners, had attained their utmost point of excess: from that period a succession of causes contributed to its subversion.†

Considering the narrow limits within which the power of princes was confined during the feudal ages, it is not a matter of surprise that they seized every opportunity of weakening a system so hostile to their authority. This could be done by no other means than by exalting the people, whose cause was identified with that of the sovereign. To produce this effect, the monarchs of Europe, during several centuries, devised expedients which, by a remote influence, scarcely perceptible to nobles more versed in war than in politics, tended

* For an account of the enormities and frequency of private wars, see Greg. Turens. lib. 7. cap. 2. and lib. 10. cap. 27. *Ordonnances des Rois de France*, tom. 1 and 2, and *Gesta Dei per Francos*, l. p. 482. For the decrees of the church as well as of kings against these disorders, see Du Mont *Corps diplomat.* l. p. 41. Bouquet *Recueil des Hist.* tom. 10. p. 49, 59, 107. Du Cange *Voce Treuga*, (i. e.) truce of God. Schotti *Hispan. Illustrata*, 3. p. 733. Also laws of Ina, laws of Edward the confessor, and many other princes.

† Poland, till lately, exhibited a miniature picture of the state of all Europe during the feudal ages.

gradually to abridge the powers of the aristocracy. One of their first measures was that of granting immunities to cities and corporate bodies, which, being in consequence attached to the sovereign, and gradually increasing in opulence and strength, became a barrier between the nobles and the crown : another was to restore social order by abolishing private wars ; and in this they were powerfully seconded by the authority of the church, which justly declared those deadly feuds to be diametrically opposite to the spirit of christianity. It was equally necessary to deprive the great barons of their juridical powers, which were so injurious to the royal authority, and to extirpate a number of other abuses that were the bane of European society.

But the attainment of these objects would have been next to impossible had not events occurred which proved highly favourable to the efforts of the princes of Europe.* The crusades, which, considered in one point of view, appear to be the most romantic expeditions recorded in the annals of the world ; and the history of which, is regarded in modern times, as a singular memorial of human fanaticism and folly, greatly contributed to enfeeble and eventually to abolish the exorbitant

* For a short but lively dissertation on the decline of the feudal system, vide Segur's Hist. Fred. William, vol. 2. p. 61—65.

powers of the aristocracy.* The nobles who took the cross, being inflamed with an enthusiastic zeal for the recovery of the holy land, and animated by extravagant expectations of splendid conquests in Asia, often relinquished, without reluctance, their ancient inheritances in Europe for prices far below their real value, in order to defray the expences of their expeditions to those remote regions. They also granted, for small sums of money, extensive immunities to towns within their jurisdiction.† The monarchs seized this favourable opportunity, and, by purchase, annexed to the royal demesnes considerable territories. The abbots and prelates of the church also purchased large estates. Many of the barons perished in these holy wars; and several of them leaving no heirs, their fiefs reverted to the crown; and by these accessions of property and influence, transferred from one scale of the political balance to the other, the regal authority gained strength in proportion as the power of the aristocracy declined.‡ The absence of so many potent vassals also suspended, and in a great measure, extinguished the

* For an investigation of the sentiments, which may be regarded as the remote causes of the crusades, see chap. 11.

+ Hist. du Dauph. tom. 1, p. 332, &c. Hist. de Languedoc, tom. 2, p. 287.

‡ Vide Millar's Hist. Eng. Gov. vol. 2. p. 189.

private hostilities which had banished tranquillity from the feudal kingdoms.

The influence of the crusades on the commerce and opulence of Europe, were not less important than their effects on its political system. The first rendezvous of the crusaders was commonly in Italy or Sicily. Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and other cities, which furnished them with transports, and supplied them with military stores and provisions, were enriched by that lucrative trade, and obtained great immunities and privileges in the settlements made by the christians in Asia.* The conquest of Constantinople by the Latins, threw all the trade of the Eastern empire into the hands of the Italians, especially those of Venice and Genoa. Commerce is productive of opulence, which, if judiciously employed, is followed by influence and power.† The Italians, enriched by the wealth which flowed from such copious sources, imbibed a spirit of liberty and independence incompatible with feudal subjection. The contests also which took place between the emperors and the popes, were favourable to the liberties of the people. The Italian cities, assuming new

* Muratori Antiq. Ital. Med. Œvi. 2. p. 905, &c.

† For the high opinion which the French entertained of the superiority of the Italians, vide *Gesta Dei per Francos*. 2. p. 1085.—N. B. Constantinople was taken by the French and Venetians, A. D. 1204.

privileges, formed themselves into bodies politic, governed by their own laws, and entirely cast off the yoke of the barons. Some of these cities, taking advantage of the necessities of the emperors, purchased, or, by successful revolt, extorted from them such immunities as left them little more than a nominal sovereignty.* The institution of these municipalities soon made its way into France, Spain, Flanders, Germany, and England, with this material difference, that in these countries they were established by the sovereigns in order to diminish the power of the barons; but in Italy the inhabitants having purchased, or extorted their privileges, formed their cities into distinct and independent republics; and although for a considerable time, they acknowledged the paramount sovereignty of the emperors, it appears that before the close of the thirteenth century, most of them had entirely shaken off every mark of subjection to the imperial authority,

The crusades had also a very important effect in extending the sphere of geographical and political knowledge. The nobles of the different kingdoms of Europe were brought into amicable contact and intimacy, and being joined in one common cause, began to consider

* From the time of Charlemagne the emperors of Germany had considered themselves as sovereigns of Italy.

christendom as their common country. The novelty of these circumstances could not fail of extending their ideas, and refining their manners. In their journey towards Palestine, the crusaders passed through countries more civilized than their own—countries in which the arts both of convenience and elegances flourished in a degree far beyond any thing that they had hitherto seen. In opulence and splendour the Italian cities were greatly superior to those of England, France, and Germany. Constantinople, which had never yet felt the destructive rage of barbarians, far surpassed the other cities of Europe in extent, population, commerce, wealth, and magnificence. That capital of the east was the great mart for the rich commodities of India, and the only city of Europe that retained any image of the ancient arts, or any tincture of Grecian literature. The crusaders could not march through those countries, and behold their institutions, their civilization and opulence, without finding their prejudices weakened, their views enlarged, and their minds enlightened by the accession of new ideas; and the illumination was rendered more general by the close intercourse which subsisted between the east and the west, during almost two centuries. Accordingly we discover, soon after the commencement of the crusades, a consider-

able change in the aspect of Europe, a greater degree of splendour in courts, of order in government, of magnificence in buildings, and of refinement in manners. To these romantic expeditions, therefore, we owe the first permanent gleam of light that burst through the gloom in which Europe was involved.

The spirit of chivalry had also a considerable influence in polishing the manners of Europe. This singular institution, in which valour, gallantry, and religion, were so strangely blended, appears to have derived its origin from the crusades, and it partook of their romantic cast.* It arose out of the state of society, which, in those ages, exhibited a scene of continual war, rapine, and anarchy. The weak and unarmed were every moment exposed to insults and injuries, which the power of the sovereign was too limited to prevent, and the administration of justice too feeble to redress. There was scarcely any protection against violence and oppression, but what the valour and generosity of private persons afforded. When the final reduction of the holy land under the dominion of infidels, put an end to these foreign expeditions which had drained Europe of so much noble blood, chivalry was the only employ that was left for the activity

* Chivalry was instituted in the twelfth century.

and courage of martial adventurers. To check the insolence of oppressors, to succour the distressed, to avenge or protect women, orphans, or ecclesiastics, who could not bear arms in their own defence, were acts of the greatest prowess and merit. Valour, humanity, courtesy, justice, and honour, were the characteristics of chivalry. Young men of noble birth were trained to knighthood by previous discipline, and initiated into the order by religious ceremonies, the most sacred and solemn. It was esteemed the highest distinction, and considered by monarchs, as giving an additional lustre to their crowns. The sentiments which chivalry inspired, had a wonderful influence on Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and were so deeply rooted as to operate after the vigour of the institution declined. Humanity in war, refinement in gallantry, and many other circumstances which distinguish modern from ancient manners, may be, in a great measure, ascribed to the now obsolete institution of chivalry.

During the long period of time which has here been brought under consideration in the most concentrated form, many other remarkable events concurred to promote the progress of knowledge, commerce, and civilization. The revival of the study of the Roman law, by the discovery of the pandects of Justinian,

greatly contributed to dispel the cloud of barbarism that overshadowed Europe.* A college of civil law was soon after established at Bologna. The improvements which now began to take place in juridical proceedings, produced a change in the social system of great importance and extensive effect. They obliged men to cultivate different talents and to acquire different accomplishments, in order to qualify themselves for the various functions which became necessary in society. Another profession besides that of arms was introduced amongst the laity. The affairs of civil life became objects of attention; and the cultivation of the arts of peace began to be regarded as honourable. The culture and manufacture of silk, introduced into Sicily by Roger I. opened a new field to commerce and industry. And the invention of paper, about the same time, was a circumstance exceedingly favourable to the diffusion of learning.† Universi-

* Giann. Hist. lib. 1. cap. 2.

† These occurrences, so highly favourable to the civilization of Europe, were nearly cotemporary. The year 1096 was the era of the first crusade. Chivalry was instituted in the following century. Silk was introduced into Sicily about A. D. 1130.—See Giannone Hist. Naples, lib. 11. cap. 7. The pandects of Justinian were found A. D. 1137. The invention of paper is ascribed to the eleventh, or with greater probability to the twelfth century; and it is certain, that all these remarkable events took place within the short period of 100 years. Before the invention of paper, MSS. were written on parchment, and were exceedingly scarce.—See Muratori Antiq. Ital. 3. p. 893, &c. and 9. p. 789.—Hist. Littéraire de France, tom. 6. p. 6.

ties also were established for the instruction of youth.* All these circumstances concurred in a wonderful manner to the civilization of Europe. In the fourteenth century, the invention of the mariner's compass opened the way for all the improvements since made in the art of navigation, and for the extension of commerce; while the discovery of the powers of gunpowder, rendered war a scientific profession.† The fifteenth century is distinguished in history by three great events, which, by their consequences, may be considered as having completed the illumination of the human intellect. These were the invention of printing, the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks, and the discovery of America.‡ The art of printing was the cause of the diffusion of learning, which the scarcity and consequent dearness of books had before rendered impossible: the capture of Constantinople

* The schools were, at first, in the cathedrals and monasteries, and the plan of instruction was very limited. Universities seem to have been established in the twelfth century. Henault *Abreg. Chronol. de l'Histoire de France* ad an. 1180 and 1215—1223, and Crevier *Hist. de l'Universite de Paris*, tom. I. p. 247, &c. The president Henault rejects the vulgar error that the university of Paris was founded by Charlemagne. *Hen. Ab. Chron.* ad an. 1223.

† The mariner's compass was invented A. D. 1302,—Gunpowder A. D. 1340.

‡ The art of printing was invented about A. D. 1430, but it was not brought to perfection till near the end of the 15th century. Constantinople was taken by the Turkish Sultan, Mahomed II. A. D. 1453. America discovered by Columbus A. D. 1492.

obliged the literati of the eastern empire to seek an asylum in Italy, where they introduced a taste for the study of the Greek language; and the discovery of a new continent excited the spirit of mercantile adventure throughout Europe.* Since these events took place, arts, sciences, and literature, commerce and civilization have advanced with a rapidity unparalleled in the annals of the world.

During several centuries, the depression of the nobles, and the exaltation of the people, had been the great object of the monarchs of Europe. But without the aid of favouring circumstances, princes cannot change the whole system of society. Commerce, promoted by the improvement of navigation, the discovery of America, and other concurrent causes, pouring in wealth from multiplied sources, increased the importance of the commons, and, in conjunction with the diffusion of knowledge, qualified them for the station which they ought to occupy in the political scale. In England, the feudal system sunk into oblivion in consequence of the general change which had taken place in the ideas and manners of men, and in the circumstances of the nation.†

* The discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope to India, may also be numbered among the events which contributed to extend the commerce of Europe. It took place A. D. 1494.

† For observations on the causes that produced the abolition of villanage in England, see Millar Hist. Eng. Gov. vol. 2, cap. 9.

In the other European countries which are less commercial and opulent, though some relics of it yet remain, its pressure is inconsiderable. In France and Sicily it is completely abolished; and in the eastern parts of Europe, where commerce has not yet diffused a sufficient degree of civilization and intelligence among the lower orders of the people, to qualify them for the enjoyment of complete liberty, their condition is greatly ameliorated by the humane and judicious regulations of government.*

If we compare the events which have contributed to form the genius and character of Europe, with those which have taken place in other quarters of the globe, we shall readily perceive a total difference. As to America its history is comprised within a narrow compass; and all the remarkable events which have taken place on that continent, have been produced by the efforts of Europeans. Its history, however, short as it is, displays, in the most striking manner, the superiority of the civilized man over the savage. Africa, with the exception of Egypt, and the territory which extends along the shores of the Mediterranean, furnishes no materials to the annals of the

* The immortal Catharine II. of Russia, greatly ameliorated the condition of her subjects, and has prepared the way for a gradual emancipation of the peasantry, which, in process of time, will undoubtedly take place.

world. The geography of its vast interior is almost wholly unknown, and the history of its barbarous nations and tribes is buried in profound oblivion. If we possessed the means of investigating the causes which have kept that vast continent in a state of perpetual barbarism, we should undoubtedly discover them, partly in the localities of its interior regions, and partly in the events that have taken place amongst its inhabitants.* The migrations of tribes and colonies from the original seats of mankind, took place under various and sometimes very different circumstances. In some cases, they arose from a spirit of adventure, and a desire of obtaining better settlements and more ample possessions: at other times, from expulsion by a conquering people or a victorious party; and often, perhaps, from the banishment of criminals. To the last of these causes, a modern writer thinks that the origin of the savage state is chiefly to be ascribed. "Various criminals," says he, "followed by their families, must have been, from time to time, driven to countries far distant from the parent state. There ignorant of all the arts, destitute of tools, and furnished only with bows and arrows, and fishing tackling, they fell into that miserable, unconnected, and

* See the observations on the want of inland seas, &c. cap. 1.

lawless state which we call savage. In a course of ages, their original language was corrupted or lost. Different nations or tribes arose from a succession of such outlaws from different countries, or, perhaps, from the same.* The savage state of life may also have originated in some places from shipwreck on desert coasts, but this could not have been the case in southern and central Africa.

Colonies were sometimes led into distant regions, by men of superior abilities and knowledge, from countries in which some progress had already been made in civilization. Such were Inachus, Danaus, Cadmus, and Cecrops, who conducted colonies from Phœnicia and Egypt into Greece.† Such also appear to have been the adventurers who led colonies from Greece into Italy, Sicily, and Gaul. These, however, were not the first migrations into those countries: they had all been

* Kirwan's *Essay on Human Happiness*, p. 111—112.

† Inachus conducted a colony either from Phœnicia or Egypt, into Greece about A. A. C. 1856.—Vide Apollodorus lib. 2.—Pausanias lib. 2.—Danaus, the famous Egyptian adventurer, supplanted the Inachidæ, and built the citadel of Argos.—Vide Pausanias lib. 2.—Strabo lib. 1. p. 23. Cadmus, of Tyre, planted a colony in Beotia, founded the city of Thebes, and introduced the Phœnician alphabet into Greece, about A. A. C. 1493.—Vide Herodotus lib. 2, cap. 49.—Strabo lib. 8, p. 401.—Pausanias lib. 9. Cecrops, the leader of a band of Egyptian emigrants, founded the city of Athens, or at least the citadel, which was at first called Cecropia, and afterwards Acropolis, about A. A. C. 1556.—Vide Apollod. lib. 3.—Strabo lib. 9. Plin. lib. 7, cap. 56.—Euseb. Prep. Evangil. lib. 10, cap. 10.—Potter *Archæol. Grec.* cap. 2 and 8.

peopled several centuries before; and their aboriginal inhabitants were found in the most savage state, without either government or laws.* Such was also the state of interior Africa, in the time of Pomponius Mela, so that it seems some improvement has since taken place even in that dark quarter of the globe.† It is extremely probable, that the first of the human species that penetrated into the interior of Africa, were fugitives or exiles of the lowest class from Egypt or Abyssinia. These being but little acquainted with the arts of civilized life, and still less with the nature of government, would easily sink into a savage state, in which they would continue till some individuals of superior abilities would reduce the rest under their dominion, and thus form them into barbarian kingdoms and communities, as they are found at present to exist. The primeval migrations of men, and the circumstances attending their dispersion into the different regions of the earth, are subjects which the lapse of ages and the want of his-

* Sallust calls the original inhabitants of Italy, "*Genus agreste, sine legibus, sine imperio, liberum atque solutum.*" "A savage race, without laws, without government, absolutely free from control." Sallust de Bello Catalin.

† Pomponius Mela, speaking of the people in the interior of Africa, says, "*In familias passim et sine lege dispersi nihil in commune consultant.*" "They consist of families dispersed over the country, without law, and without any common interest." Pomp. Mela lib. 1. cap. 8.

torical memorials have involved in the shades of oblivion; but it appears, that after removing to a distance from their original seats, they generally sunk into ignorance and barbarism.

But all that can be said of Africa* amounts to nothing more than conjecture. The history of Asia is more luminous as well as of greater importance; and it exhibits a series of events very different from those which mark the annals of Europe. While this quarter of the globe, excepting that part of Spain which was under the dominion of the Arabians, was involved in profound ignorance, learning was assiduously cultivated in Asia; and Bagdad, the capital of the Caliphate, was the seat of the sciences. But while Europe was emerging from the gloom, by which it had long been obscured, events of a most disastrous nature took place in Asia. The Turks and the Tartars from the north broke in upon the Caliphate, and overturned the empire of the Arabians, as the Goths, Vandals, Suevi, Huns, Lombards, and other barbarians had formerly subverted that of the Romans.† Their conquests were also followed by similar consequences. The arts, the sciences, and the lite-

* Except Egypt and the northern coasts.

† Bagdad was taken by the Tartars under Hologau or Hocatou, grandson of Genghis Khan and the Caliphate subverted, A. D. 1258. See Gibb. Dec. Rom. Emp. vol. 11—p. 416, and Anderson's royal Geneal. Tab. 151.

ture of the Arabians disappeared with the subversion of their empire; and Asia was reduced to the same state of anarchy, slavery, and ignorance as that in which Europe had been involved during many centuries. Since that time the political circumstances of Europe and Asia have been widely different, the former has been making a rapid progress in literature, sciences, and commerce, and in all the arts of civilization, while the latter has been the theatre of successive and bloody revolutions.* The principal inventions and discoveries already mentioned,—the mariner's compass,† the art of printing, and the discovery of America, are occurrences by which the history of Europe is pre-eminently distinguished above that of the other quarters of the globe, and the consequences are a decided superiority in every thing that can render nations illustrious, and dignify the human character.

Many of these events which have had so great and so visible an influence on national circumstances and on national character, are such as, in popular language, are called accidental,

* The conquests of Tamerlane in the 14th and 15th centuries, were scarcely less fatal to Asia than those of Genghis Khan and his successors.

† The Chinese are said to have had the mariner's compass before the Europeans visited that country; but it was unknown to the nations of western Asia. The Chinese compass, however, is not brought to the same perfection as that of the Europeans.

although providential would be an epithet of much greater propriety. The causes which decide the fate of nations and dynasties are often apparently trifling. Sometimes they are of a momentary nature, although their effects endure for ages: a wrong measure in politics, an error in the plan of a battle, or of a campaign, has ruined great princes, and overturned mighty empires. Had Darius acted in the same manner as the monarch who sat on his throne near seven hundred years afterwards, the Macedonians would not have become masters of his extensive dominions; and Alexander would had no better success in his invasion of Persia than the Emperor Julian met with in following the same route, or than Napoleon recently experienced in penetrating to Moscow. Sometimes one single man gives an impulse to millions, and causes revolutions in empires; but to produce such effects great abilities are insufficient, without other coincidences. Genius and talents are the productions of every age, and of almost every soil and climate; but a favourable combination of circumstances is necessary for their successful exertion. In the wide and perpetually revolving circle of mundane affairs, every event is produced by some cause which is often the effect of a cause preceding and sometimes so recondite as to oppose an insurmountable

carrier to the progress of human research. The history of mankind, throughout every volume and every page, displays an uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, the first links of which are in heaven, the others upon earth; and teaches the moral philosopher this important truth, that the world is governed by the eternal providence of that being whose ways are inscrutable.

CHAP. XIII.

COMPARISON
OF THE ANCIENTS AND MODERNS

IN concluding these investigations of national character, it may not be amiss to cast a glance of comparison on the ancient and modern world. On this subject, indeed, as on many others, opinions are divided, and, probably will never be reconciled. By the denomination of ancients the Greeks and the Romans are generally designated, these being the only nations of antiquity which we consider chiefly worthy of our attention and inquiries. The comparison between these and the moderns has seldom been fairly made, as there are few subjects on which the mind of a literary man is more liable to be biassed by the prejudices of early education. The classical authors of Greece and Rome were our companions in

early youth: from their writings were formed most of our ideas of all that is great and sublime: it is, therefore, no wonder that the feelings of the man are influenced by the warm imaginations of the schoolboy. "The name of Rome," says a modern writer, "echoes in our ears from our infancy: our lisping tongues are tuned to her language; and our first and most delightful years are passed among her orators, poets, and historians. We are taught betimes to take a deep interest in her fortunes, and to adopt her cause as that of our own country, with spirit and passion. Such impressions, made at such an age, are indelible, and, it must be admitted, are likely to influence our feelings and opinions during life."* That this is the case, perhaps, no one will seriously deny; and this early prepossession naturally nourishes in our minds an admiration of the Greeks and the Romans, of their progress in arts, and achievements in arms.

The narrow limits which we are apt to set to our views, in comparing the ancients with the moderns, often give rise to egregious errors. In contemplating the splendid memorials of Greek and Roman renown, we fix our eyes on a few illustrious names, without deigning to cast a look on the great mass of the people, or

* Eustace classical tour through Italy, vol. 1—p. 194,

to make any inquiry concerning their condition and character.

When we cast back our eyes on the flourishing ages of Greece and Rome, we, indeed, behold prodigies of intellect that form the pre-eminent glory of the human species. But these poets, philosophers, and orators, whom we so greatly admire, and who stand as Pharos in the sea of literature, were few in number amidst a vast population composed of citizens and slaves, almost equally ignorant and superstitious. They were as lamps hung out to illumine an immense gloom; and to these distinguished individuals belong all the applause that we are accustomed to bestow on Greek and Roman intellect; for certainly no one will imagine that the common people of Athens or Rome, during the periods of their greatest glory, could bear any comparison with the same class now existing in Great Britain, Germany, France, or Italy, or, indeed, in any European country where books are numerous and cheap, and the means of acquiring knowledge are infinitely multiplied. Reading was not very common in Rome, and it was still less practised at Athens: even newspapers, if they existed in the former city, must, from their price, have been inaccessible to the far greater part of the people; and we have not the least intimation of any such publications in the

atter.* The great majority of the inhabitants of these two celebrated cities, had no other means of acquiring information than by listening to the harangues of their orators in the forum. From the great expence of obtaining instruction, indeed, we may, with certainty, conclude, that the number of those who could read was comparatively small, and that notwithstanding the talents displayed by a few literati, the multitude was involved in the most profound ignorance.

Illumination of intellect collects its materials from the phenomena of the physical world, and from the history of man; but in both these departments of knowledge, the ancients wanted that experience which has so greatly enlightened the moderns. "The opinion," says Lord Bacon, "which men form respecting antiquity, is vague, and incongruous with the meaning of the word. For the long duration and old age of the world, circumstances which belong to our times and not to its younger state as it existed in the days of the ancients, ought to be regarded as antiquity. That age, indeed, may, with respect to us, be considered

* It appears from Suetonius that the Romans began in the time of Julius Cæsar to have their "acta diurna," something like our newspapers. *Primus omnium instituit ut tam Senatus quam populi diurna acta conficerentur et publicarentur.* He first ordained that the diurnal acts both of the senate and the people should be compiled and published. Sueton. *Vita Julii Cæsaris.*

as ancient ; but with respect to the world itself, it was new.* The ancients, notwithstanding our admiration of their boasted attainments, had proceeded but little beyond the boundaries of intellectual infancy. In all their literary productions we cannot but remark the contracted circle of their ideas, when compared with the extensive range of thought developed by modern writers. In the time of the Greeks, and even of the Romans, the world was yet new. The number of important events and of great characters which had been produced, was comparatively small : history had only a narrow range, and the limits of geography were yet more contracted. The Greeks when in the zenith of their illumination and glory, were acquainted with no foreign nations except the Egyptians, Persians, and Carthaginians, whose history, government, and laws seemed to merit their attention. The Romans regarded all other nations, besides themselves and the Greeks, as barbarians ; and from them could obtain nothing to increase their literary stock. The number of important events which have taken place since the age of Cicero, and

* “ De antiquitate autem opinio quam homines foveant negligens monitum est et vix verbo ipsi congrua. Mundi enim senium et grandævitæ pro antiquitate habenda sunt ; quæ temporibus nostris tribui debent, non juniore ætati mundi qualis apud antiquos fuit. Illa enim ætas respectu nostri antiqua et major, respectu mundi ipsius nova et minor fuit.” Bacon Nov. Organum, lib. 1. aph. 84.

the reign of Augustus, when the literature of Rome shone out in its greatest effulgence, the vast complexity of modern politics and of modern commerce, as well as the light diffused by christianity, have all contributed to the multiplication of human ideas, and to the general illumination of intellect in a manner and degree that cannot be estimated by a superficial survey.

In regard to the acquisition of science, and every thing relating to mental improvement, the ancients had a very great advantage over the moderns in the œconomy of time. Several of the years allotted to modern education are spent in learning different languages. But the Greeks studied no other language than their own, and the Romans learned none but their own and the Greek. Their whole time might, therefore, be employed in exercising their own understandings, while a great part of modern study consists in remembering, instead of reflecting and reasoning. This disadvantage on the side of the moderns, however, is counterbalanced by the advantage which they possess in having the laborious discoveries of the ancients for elementary principles of knowledge.

Poetry was the species of literature which was first brought to perfection, and in this department the ancients have left some monu-

ments of genius, which can scarcely be rivalled by the moderns; for, whatever prejudice may suggest, it is very questionable whether any poetical compositions, of latter times, can vie with those of Homer and Virgil. The first poets had a great advantage over their successors: the physical and moral world was all before them, unmarked by any footsteps: they could chuse their ground without having their way intercepted by any previous occupants and they seized on what was most striking in nature and incident. Their successors, finding the most commanding situations already occupied, were obliged to take such posts as were less advantageous *. Originality and energy characterise the poetry of the ancients: correctness, elegance, and flowery language are the excellences most easily attainable by the moderns.† The Greek and Roman languages also being more harmonious than those now spoken in Europe, gave to ancient poetry peculiar charms. In the early ages, imagination, which acted by its own native powers, was stronger than judgment, which owes its correctness to observation and experience: the ancients, therefore, display greater excellence in poetry than in history.

The Greek and Roman historians narrate with force and simplicity, but they make very

* See Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas*, ch. 10.

† Dr. Johnson *ubi supra*.

few reflections; nor can the most devoted admirers of antiquity pretend that Herodotus, Thucidides, or Livy, were equal to Robertson, Hume, or Gibbon, in the investigation of moral causes, or in the delineation of pictures of society. Had Gibbon adopted a less flowery and poetical stile, had he not introduced into his narrations a studied obscurity, and had he not sometimes made them a vehicle to infidelity, his celebrated work on the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" might, from its extensive range and its variety of collateral matter, intimately connected, and judiciously interwoven with his principal subject, be considered as an historical monument greatly superior to any of those of the ancients. But this praise is not to be confined to the British historians. The "*Storia Della Literatura Italiana*" of the Abbé Tiraboschi, is a work to which nothing similar or parallel is to be found in the whole range of Greek and Roman literature.

During the existence of the republic, studies which had no reference to political objects were little esteemed at Rome. It was chiefly by their supposed subserviency to popular or senatorial eloquence that the Romans were first induced to listen to the lessons of the Grecian philosophy. Perfection in the rhetorical art was the principal object of their in-

tellectual exertions : eloquence in speech, and elegance of stile, were the great excellences of their orators and writers ; and in these they are equalled by few, and certainly surpassed by none of the moderns. But in the two last centuries, Europe has produced a number of writers in various departments of literature, who display a reach of thought, a power of conception and reasoning, and an extent of observation that cannot be found in the most elegant compositions of the ancients. Even in oratory, Townsend, Flood, Pitt, Burke, Fox, Windham, and many other of our British senators, if they have not come up to the standard of Ciceronian eloquence, have, in the variety and complexity of the subjects which they have treated, in the political, commercial, and moral knowledge which they have displayed, and in the vast expansion of their ideas, excelled all the celebrated orators of antiquity.

With respect to the fine arts, it must be acknowledged that the ancients carried them to a degree of perfection which the moderns can only aspire to equal, but can never hope to excel. Here, indeed, they must be regarded as our masters ; and the “ *Chef d’ Œuvres* ” which they have left, are, to this day, the standards of elegance and taste. To the Greeks we are certainly indebted for our knowledge of the orders of architecture, which are re-

garded as constituting the perfection of that magnificent art. But it must not be forgotten, that the Grecian architecture presents itself to us with the same kind of splendid illusion that accompanies every memorial of ancient greatness. "The proportions of the orders," says a modern writer, "it is to be remembered, are distinct subjects of beauty from the ornaments with which they are embellished, from the magnificence with which they are executed, from the purposes of elegance they are intended to serve, or the scenes of grandeur they were intended to adorn. It is in such scenes, however, and with such additions that we are accustomed to observe them; and while we feel the effect of all these accidental associations, we are seldom willing to examine what are the causes of the complex emotion we feel, and readily attribute to the nature of the architecture itself, the whole pleasure that we enjoy. But besides these, there are other associations that we have with these forms, that still more powerfully serve to command our admiration; for they are the Grecian orders: they derive their origin from those times, and were the ornaments of those countries which are most hallowed in our imagination."* This illusion, however, may, by an easy effort of the mind, be dispelled, and the proportions of the orders may be examined

* Allison on Taste, vol. 2. p. 157.

without these associations. But the Grecian and Gothic stiles are of too dissimilar a nature to be brought into fair comparison: the former displays the nicest harmony in all its parts, and the most elegant union of the whole; the latter exhibits a singular combination of strength, majesty, and heaviness in the whole, and of remarkable lightness in the details. Symmetry and just proportion are the characteristics of the Grecian, striking effect is that of the Gothic architecture. Properties so different cannot admit of comparison; but as effect is one of the principal objects of art, our Gothic cathedrals can scarcely be considered as inferior to the temples of the ancients: and although the transept of the former is an absolute loss as it does not appear in an uniformity of view like the plain parallelogram of the latter; yet we cannot contemplate the "Long drawn aisle and fretted vault" without feelings of religious awe and veneration.

The moderns, however, seem to acknowledge the superiority of the architectural genius of the Greeks, by adopting their orders in their most recent erections, whether for civil or religious purposes, as is seen in the cathedrals of St. Peter, at Rome; and St. Paul, at London, which far exceed in magnitude the most celebrated temples of the ancients. But without entering into details, it is risking nothing to

assert that the structures of modern Europe surpass, at present, all those of the ancient world. Augustus could boast that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble, and succeeding emperors adorned that capital of the world with many magnificent edifices and splendid embellishments. But there is great reason to believe that ancient Rome, when mistress of the world, was not superior to modern Rome in the magnificence of its structures. It is certain, at least, that without excepting even the temple of Diana at Ephesus, or the Parthenon at Athens, the cathedral church of St. Peter is far superior to any of the celebrated structures of antiquity.

In sculpture as well as in architecture we must acknowledge the ancients as our masters. Their works are the standard of excellence and the models of modern art. Their religion was peculiarly favourable to the genius of the sculptor. The embellishment of their temples, with the statues of gods and heroes, constantly called superior talents into exertion; and modern genius has scarcely ever been able to produce any thing equal to the models left by the ancients. Of their paintings, none have survived the lapse of time, and the ravages of barbarians. We read the names of *Luexes*, *Apelles*, and others of their celebrated painters; but as none of their works exist, they

cannot be brought before the tribunal of taste; and indeed it is difficult to conceive that they could ever surpass in excellence the productions of Raphael, Correggio, the Carracci, and other painters of Italy.

Architecture and sculpture are therefore the arts in which the ancients may fairly be considered as superior to the moderns, since whatever degree of perfection the latter have attained has been the result of studying and imitating the Grecian models. But in the sciences the ancients were extremely deficient. In astronomy their knowledge was trifling. The Chaldeans are supposed to have been the first people by whom it was cultivated, a circumstance which is ascribed partly to their early civilization, and partly to the nature of their country and climate; for in the midst of extensive plains, under a serene sky, they had, during the greatest part of the year, an opportunity of observing the motions of the celestial orbs, without being impeded by the intervention of clouds or foggy weather.* Herodotus attributes to the Babylonians the invention of the gnomon, the knowledge of the pole and the division of the day into twelve equal parts; and he gives us reason to believe that the Egyptians were indebted to them for the rudi-

* Aristotle de Cœl. lib. 2. cap. 12.

ments of astronomical science,* Diodorus Siculus pretends to describe the extent of their astronomical attainments, but he lived too long after the extinction of the Babylonian empire, to be deemed an authoritative evidence.† Either they or the Egyptians had divided the zodiac into twelve signs, and the year into twelve months of thirty days each, with intercalary days to supply the deficiency. Thales, who had travelled into Egypt, has been celebrated as the first of the Greeks that predicted an eclipse; but there is no authentic proof of his having made an exact calculation of its time. The most famed of the Grecian astronomers were Hipparchus and Ptolemy, but their advances sink into insignificancy when compared with those of Galileo, Kepler, Copernicus, Cassini, Newton, Flamstead, Halley, De la Lande, and other celebrated moderns. When we consider that the ancients had no telescopes, nor numerical figures, and were ignorant of logarithms and fluxions, we may readily conceive that their astronomical observations must have been very defective, and their calculations exceedingly tedious and difficult. Under such disadvantages it was impossible that the science of astronomy should

* Vide Herodot. lib. 2. cap. 109.

† Diod. Sicul. lib. 2. p. 98. Diod. Sicul. wrote in the time of Julius Cæsar, about five centuries after Babylon was captured by Cyrus.

be carried into any great degree of perfection.

In geography the ancients were not less inferior to the moderns than in astronomy. The most learned of the Romans supposed the torrid zone to be wholly uninhabitable by reason of excessive heat and aridity.* They were ignorant of the existence of America: they knew scarcely any thing of India, and nothing of China:† even that part of Europe which lies to the north of the Danube was to them almost “terra incognita.” In every respect the geographical knowledge of the ancients was contemptible.‡

Navigation, considered as a science, may be said to have been almost wholly unknown to the Greeks and the Romans, as well as to all the other nations of antiquity. Their ignorance of the compass rendered it extremely dangerous to launch out far into the open seas, and obliged them to creep along the shores. Among the ancients the whole art of navigating with safety consisted in following the rule prescribed by Propertius,

* Cicero *Somnium Scipionis*. The Romans scarcely knew any thing of Germany before the expeditions of Drusus and Germanicus.

† Strabo was totally ignorant of China, and the countries forming what is commonly called the farther peninsula of India. Vide Rennell. *Geog. Herodot.* p. 169.

‡ See the strange notions of Tacitus *De Morib. Germ.* cap. 45.

*“Alter remus aquas, alter tibi, ratat arenas
Tutus eris, medio maxima turba mari.”**

To shun the dangers of the ocean sweep
The sands with one oar and with one the deep.

Such ignorance in the art of navigation was sufficient to deter them from undertaking long voyages and making distant discoveries, although they did not want the courage and perseverance necessary for such enterprises ; for it must be acknowledged that, in their circumstances, the voyages of the Phœnicians to Great Britain were greater undertakings than those of the Europeans to the East Indies or China ; and that the circumnavigation of the African continent by the fleet of Necho, king of Egypt, six hundred and four years before the christian æra was, beyond all comparison, a more daring and difficult attempt than the circumnavigations of the globe by the moderns. After that extraordinary voyage the spirit of nautical enterprise seems to have long been retrograde, or at least stationary. The Greeks never surpassed, perhaps never equalled, the Phœnicians in maritime affairs ; and the Romans never concerned themselves with navigation any further than in rendering it subservient to war. But amongst the nations of modern Europe, the nautical art has been brought to a state of perfection that would have been deemed impossible by the ancients ; and it has produced effects of the

* Propert. lib. 3.

greatest importance. Besides the discovery of a new world, the coasts of every part of the globe have been explored; and the moderns have become well acquainted with countries far beyond the limits of Greek and Roman geography.

If we examine the boasted philosophy of the Greeks, we shall find that it consisted rather of ideal hypotheses than of real discoveries, and accurate knowledge. In comparing the ancients and moderns, with respect to their acquaintance with nature, we shall find the former very far inferior to the latter in the variety and correctness of their information. The ancient philosophers were too deeply engaged in sublime speculations relative to general principles, to interest themselves in minute details concerning particular objects. Their views were directed not so much to the qualities and uses of natural bodies, as to metaphysical theories; and their principal aim was to exercise themselves in the arts of disputation. These philosophers, indeed, were too few in number, and had too contracted a sphere of observation to enable them to examine minutely the system of nature. The extensive diffusion of learning, in modern times, has multiplied in more than a hundred fold proportion, the number of persons qualified for accurate investigation, while the general communica-

tion between men of learning in the different countries of Europe, has extended their sphere of observation, and enabled them to make a wider survey.

But the principal cause that rendered the ancients so greatly inferior to the moderns in natural philosophy, was their neglect of experiment. Instead of carefully observing in what manner effects were produced, by attentively comparing them with their preceding and concomitant circumstances, they amused themselves with framing a variety of fanciful hypotheses on physical subjects.* Experimental philosophy can be traced back no farther than to the Arabians. Among the ancients, Archimedes alone attempted to open the way to discovery by experiment; but this was a solitary instance without example in the preceding or imitation in the following ages. The great fault of the ancients was that of preferring metaphysical speculations to accurate observations of the phænomena of nature. The philosophy of Plato is nothing more than a tissue of grand and sublime ideas, with very little reference to visible objects. Aristotle, Pliny, and some others paid more attention to the material world, and acquired a more extensive acquaintance with nature; but their

* "The Greek philosophy, on the whole, affords little else than a picture of the imbecility of the human mind." Tytler's *Elements of Hist.* vol. 1. p. 111.

writings will bear no comparison either in variety of detail or accuracy of description with those of modern naturalists.

That the ancients possessed a considerable degree of mechanical skill is a fact sufficiently proved by the stupendous edifices which they erected, by the weights which they removed, and especially by the lofty and ponderous obelisks which they reared, after bringing them by land or by water from a great distance. But in regard to their machinery our knowledge is very limited: they have left us but little information on this subject, except in the descriptions of their catapulta, balista, and other military engines, which were of an exceedingly simple construction. It is evident, however, that their machinery was beyond all comparison less various as well as less complex, less powerful and commodious, and applied to infinitely fewer purposes than that of the moderns. Chemistry, a science very little known by the ancients, has, in the present times, been applied to the improvements of arts and manufactures, in a number of ways entirely new. Mathematics, as well as mechanics, have lent their aid towards the production and extensive diffusion of the conveniences and comforts of life.

With respect to the arts of general utility, which, spreading in numberless ramifications

and multiplying themselves almost to infinity, contribute so greatly to the comforts of all classes of society, the ancients cannot be compared to the moderns. The increase of knowledge in mechanics and chemistry has produced an incalculable increase of human power, which has enabled the moderns to carry manufactures to a degree of perfection, and to execute them with a facility unknown in the ancient world ; and the effects are seen in their cheapness and general diffusion. From the very little that we know of the price of manufactures among the Greeks and the Romans, it appears that those of the finer sort were excessively dear. Some woollen cloths cost a hundred denarii, or £3. 6s. 8d. per lb. weight, and others, of a particular dye, were sold at ten times that price.* The confined state of commerce contributed also to make many articles of luxury and elegance exceedingly dear. The Greeks and the Romans were not strangers to the rich merchandise of the east, but the price was exorbitant ; and so late as the reign of the Emperor Aurelian, silk, an article of clothing so common in modern Europe, was sold at Rome for its weight in gold. From circumstances of this kind, the author of the “Wealth of Nations” judiciously concludes, that in the

* Pliny, lib. 9, cap 19.

dress of the people of fashion, of both sexes, there was much less variety in ancient than in modern times; and this opinion seems to be sanctioned by the uniformity that is seen in the drapery of antique statues. When the expence of dress is very great, the variety must be proportionably small. But when, by the improvements made in the productive powers of manufacturing industry, the expence of dress becomes moderate, the variety will always be considerable. The machines for abridging labour, which the ingenuity of the moderns has introduced into almost every branch of business, have enabled them to multiply the supplies of human wants, while inland navigation and foreign commerce facilitate the circulation of the productions of human industry, in a manner never attempted by the ancients, and of which, indeed, they could never have formed any conception.

To mention the inferiority of the ancients when compared with the moderns, in regard to religious knowledge, is almost superfluous. The theological ideas of the Greeks and the Romans were, if possible, more absurd than those of the most despicable fanatics that have ever appeared in modern Europe. In the schools of Athens, and the other seats of learning, the youth, it is true, were instructed to reject and despise the superstitions of the

multitude. It was, indeed, impossible that a philosopher should receive, as divine truths, the tales of the poets and the incoherent traditions of antiquity. The philosophers meditated on the divine nature as a curious and interesting speculation ; and in the profound inquiry, they displayed the strength and weakness of the human intellect ; while the great mass of the people remained in all the darkness of ignorance. If from the sublime but often extravagant conceptions of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, we descend to Plotinus, Porphyry, Jamblicus, the emperor Julian, and other philosophers of the peripatetic, stoical, and platonic schools, we cannot but be amazed at their elaborate absurdities. The religion of the Greeks and the Romans was a splendid superstructure, raised on the crumbling basis of folly and fiction, originating from the hopes and fears of men, in the ages of ignorance. And a simple peasant of the present day would be astonished at the theological blindness of the ancient philosophers. This superiority of the moderns in religious knowledge, is owing to the light diffused by revelation, and not to any superior strength of understanding, or greater accuracy of investigation : but it is not for that reason less real and important.

But the arts of government and war are those by which the Greeks and Romans have chiefly attracted the admiration and applause of succeeding ages. But both these celebrated nations appear to have been totally ignorant of the representative system, the only mode of government that is calculated to maintain tranquillity in a free state of any considerable extent and population. The ancient republics, where every national measure, after being discussed by the senate, was ultimately referred to the popular assembly, were almost continually in a state of tumult and confusion. The laws of a representative government are dictated by the collective wisdom of the nation: at Athens and Rome wise men debated, but fools decided.* An impartial examination and fair comparison will oblige the most enthusiastic admirer of the ancients to acknowledge that the best of their political systems were greatly inferior to that of Great Britain, and even to those of several other modern states.

The Greeks and the Romans, by their military discipline and splendid achievements in arms, acquired a renown that has dazzled the eyes, and imposed on the minds of posterity. "The Europeans," says Helvetius, "have not

* Burke calls the Athenians a nation of wicked bedlamites. Burke's Works, vol. 1. p. 49.

the same motives to expose their lives in battle as the Greeks and Romans had, consequently the courage of armies is not so manifested in enterprizes equally hazardous, and may be reduced, perhaps, in every warrior to the sole principle of not being the first to run away.”* Helvetius seems here to entertain a very contemptible opinion of modern heroism, which, if it were true, would serve to display the incalculable power of military discipline and tactical skill; for although the people of modern Europe most certainly have not the same motives to stimulate their courage as actuated the Greeks and the Romans, yet modern armies have, in numerous instances, displayed as great intrepidity, and performed as brilliant actions as any that adorn the annals of these celebrated nations. To adduce particular examples would be unnecessary, as the whole range of history teems with proofs of the fact. We are accustomed to contemplate the Greeks and the Romans in contrast with nations to whom they were greatly superior in weapons and skill, and do not see them delineated on the same canvas with the modern Europeans, who have carried the art of war to a degree of perfection of which the ancients could never have formed any idea. The Macedonian phalanx and the Roman legion, directed

* Helvetius' Treatise on Man, vol. 1. p. 153.

by all the talents and activity of Alexander and Cæsar, would sink before the tremendous artillery and combined movements of a modern army. With respect to naval war, the knowledge of the ancients was contemptible. The most formidable fleets that the Greeks and Romans ever sent out to sea, would have been easily exterminated or instantaneously dispersed by half a dozen British frigates.

In regard to the general state of society, or that combination of circumstances resulting from government, laws, religion, commerce, &c. which constitutes the whole system of life and manners, it is easy to discover a very striking difference between the ancient and the modern world. It is difficult, in some respects, to pronounce on which side the scale of happiness preponderates, as we cannot unite the conceptions and feelings of an ancient Greek or Roman with those of a modern European. Several regulations, however, existed among the ancients which, according to our ideas, appear scarcely compatible with social happiness. The obligation of military service, imposed on all the citizens, was a hardship of the same nature as the conscription of revolutionary France, which, in this age, has been considered as the utmost stretch of tyranny.* But we

* In one respect the obligations of military service at Rome was less an hardship than the conscription laws of France. At Rome,

do not find that the people of Athens, Sparta, or Rome, ever complained of this law, or desired its abolition. An eminent writer observes, that under the Lacedæmonian government, "Men were reduced to the most miserable condition that the world ever beheld either before or since."* Yet the Lacedæmonians were contented to fare hardly during life, and died in battle with joy, in the hope that Sparta would be the predominant power in Greece. And an ancient Roman was happy amidst every hardship, in the expectation that Rome was to be the mistress of the world. Happiness, indeed, is an indefinable something, which depends not on external circumstances, but on the mind.

There is such a thing, however, as positive misery ; and this existed to a very great extent among all the ancient nations. In contemplating the Greeks and the Romans, we fix our eyes on the free citizens, without casting a look on the numerous slaves. This is one of the illusory views in which those celebrated nations are seen. The people of Athens, or rather of Attica, consisted of four distinct classes :— free citizens, foreigners, free servants, and slaves. The number of free citizens never

no citizen was compelled to serve unless he had a property to defend : in France, the conscription involved all classes.

* Kirwan's Essay on Human Happiness, p. 92.

exceeded thirty-six thousand ; the other classes amounted to nearly four hundred thousand, of whom the slaves formed the far greater number. In Sparta they bore about the same proportion to the free citizens, and were treated with peculiar severity. Slaves appear to have constituted for a long time a great majority of the population of Rome and Italy. It was once proposed to discriminate them by a peculiar habit ; but it was justly apprehended that danger might arise from shewing them their numbers.* Athænæus asserts, that he knew many Romans who had ten or even twenty thousand slaves.† And when we consider that these unfortunate men were wholly at the disposal of their masters, whose caprice and cruelty were not restrained either by law or religion, we shall find ourselves obliged to confess that the condition of the Greek and Roman world was far more miserable than that of any nation of modern Europe.

The system of slavery had also a great and what we should, in our times, deem a very pernicious influence on the condition of the free citizens, and on the whole state of society.

* Seneca says, "*Quantum periculum immineret si servi nostri numerare nos cœpissent.*" How great would be the impending danger if our slaves should once begin to ascertain our number. *De Clementia lib. 1. cap. 24.*

† Athænæus *lib. 6. ap.—Gibbon Dec. Rom. Emp. cap. 2. p. 66.*—Pliny mentions one person who had 4116 slaves. *Hist. Nat. lib. 33. ch. 47*

Almost all the ancient republics were originally founded on the basis of an agrarian law, which divided the public territory in a certain proportion amongst all the citizens. But the course of human affairs by succession, by alienation, and by various causes which operate in every country, necessarily deranged this original division, and frequently threw into the possession of one person the lands which had, at first, been allotted to many. Among the Romans in particular, a few avaricious and fortunate individuals had found means to monopolize the conquered lands which, by the fundamental laws of the state, ought to have been divided amongst the citizens. In all the dissensions between the patricians and the plebeians, this was one of the chief causes of popular complaint. To remedy this inconvenience some new laws were enacted; but they were always evaded; and the inequality of fortunes continued to increase till the far greater number of citizens possessed no lands, while others had immense estates. But without land, the manners and customs of the times rendered it difficult to a freeman to support his family and maintain the independency of his political character. In modern times if a man has no land, yet if he has a little personal property, he may occupy a farm or carry on some kind of trade; and if he possesses no

capital he may find employment either as a labourer or an artificer. But among the ancients, and particularly the Romans, the lands of the rich were all cultivated by slaves, so that a poor freeman had scarcely any chance either of taking a farm or of being employed as a labourer. The original institutions of Rome, and several other ancient republics, prohibited to the citizens the exercise of any other employment than the magistracy, war, and agriculture, and although in later times these principles might be somewhat relaxed, and the manner of thinking to which they gave rise might have ceased to operate in its primitive force, yet all trades and manufactures were carried on by the slaves of the rich for the benefit of their masters, whose wealth and authority excluded the possibility of successful competition. Such of the citizens, therefore, as possessed no land, had scarcely any other means of subsistence than the bounty of the candidates at the annual elections, and the regular distributions of corn and other provisions sent as tributes from the conquered provinces. When the poorer citizens became clamorous for the revival of the agrarian laws, their rulers used to send out colonies of them into the conquered provinces, where a certain portion of land was assigned to each individual.

In this concentrated although comprehensive view of the ancient world, we discover a picture of society very different from that which modern Europe displays; and it cannot be difficult to perceive on which side the scale preponderates. But another disgusting circumstance, which marks the state of society in ancient Greece and Rome, is entirely opposite to the polished tone of modern manners. The female sex who form one half of the human species, and without whom, as a French writer observes, the two extremes of life would be helpless, and the middle of it joyless, were in a degraded condition at Rome, and still more at Athens.* Women lived in a state of seclusion: they were in a great measure confined to their own houses: they were excluded from public entertainments, and treated as creatures of an inferior species. Such a state of manners must have thrown a gloom over all social intercourse. Madame de Stael very justly observes, that the rank which the fair sex has taken in modern society, has enriched language with new expressions, and extended the sphere of moral knowledge in develloping

* It must appear astonishing, that while women were held in contempt in Greece and at Rome, they were objects of the highest respect and veneration among the northern barbarians, who even supposed them to possess fatidical and other supernatural powers. Tacit. *de morib. German.* cap. 8.—Mallet. *North. Antiq.* ch. 7.—Tacit. *Hist.* lib. 4, cap. 61.—Cæsar *Comment.* lib. 1. cap. 50.

the traits and distinguishing the nice shades of character.*

If from pourtraying the state of morals and intellect we descend to the inanimate characteristics of difference between the ancient and modern world, we shall still find the scale to preponderate in favour of the latter. The spirit of the ancient republics of Greece and Rome displayed itself in the appearance of their cities: the private houses were small and inelegant, while the majesty of the people was represented in the splendid edifices destined for public use. A Greek writer, quoted by Dr. Clarke, describes the streets of Athens as very narrow and irregular, and the houses as poor and mean.† And such, adds Dr. Clarke, as far as inanimate objects are concerned, is the picture presented by the interesting ruins of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiæ. The doctor also further explains the subject by saying, “The plain matter of fact may prove, that in the obscure and dirty lanes of Constantinople, its small and unglazed shops, the stile of architecture observed in the dwellings, the long covered walks now serving as bazars, the loose flowing habits with long sleeves worn by the natives; even the practice of concealing the features of the women, and above all in the

* Mad. de Stael de la literature, tom. 1. p. 212.

† Dichæarchus ap. Dr. Clarke Trav. part 2—p. 3.

remarkable ceremonies and observances of the public baths, we behold the customs and appearances which characterised the cities of the Greeks.* The streets of Rome were as irregular as those of Athens, and the houses, at least for several ages, were as poor and mean.† Such was the appearance of these celebrated cities during the periods in which the Greeks and Romans so greatly attract our admiration. It was not till luxury had corrupted their manners, and their liberties were on the eve of their extinction, that the principal citizens of Athens and Rome began to construct magnificent houses, and to display their opulence and splendour in private life.

It is true that, in the last age of the republic and during the flourishing period of the empire, the luxury and extravagance of the Romans in their houses, furniture, feasts, apparel, &c. as well as in their public spectacles, exceeded almost every thing that can be conceived by a modern imagination, and would, indeed, appear incredible were it not attested

* Dr. Clarke's Trav. part 2.—p. 3.

† Before Rome was almost destroyed by the conflagration in the reign of Nero, who was believed to have been the incendiary, the streets were long, close, narrow and crooked. Tacit. annals lib. 15. cap. 38.—Livy lib. 5. cap. 55.—For this dreadful conflagration, see Tacit. An. lib. 15. cap. 38. 41.—Sucton. in Nerone, cap. 38. After that disaster, the city was rebuilt on a far more elegant plan. Tacit. annals, lib. 15. cap. 43, and Sucton, in Nerone, cap. 16.

by unquestionable authorities.* But it must still be observed, that all this splendour in private life was confined to a few overgrown individuals. And when we consider the poverty of the majority of the citizens, the great number of slaves, and the exorbitant price of the finer manufactures, as well as of several other articles of elegance and fashion, we shall be led to believe that Rome, even in the time of her greatest splendour, displayed, as at present, a remarkable mixture of magnificence and misery. It is certain that Athens, and very probable that Rome, notwithstanding the magnificence of their public edifices, and of some private palaces, never equalled London in the general appearance of the streets, the shops and the houses, nor in the elegance of dress displayed by the inhabitants. And it requires very little historical reading and reflexion to enable us to see that, with respect to the state of morals and intellect, these celebrated cities of the ancient world were greatly inferior to most of the modern European capitals.

The influence of christianity, the invention of the mariner's compass, and of the art of printing, the improvements in navigation, the discovery of America, and the general communication which has been established

* Vide Plin. lib. 9. cap. 22 23 — Tacit. Ann. lib. 3. cap. 53. — Meursius de Luxu Romanorum, cap. 3. 9. &c. — Lucan. Pharsal. lib. 1.

throughout the civilized world, are the principal causes of the superiority of the moderns over the ancients both in circumstances and character. The operation of these causes has diffused literature, sciences, arts, commerce, and civilization throughout modern Europe, and illumined the human mind with a degree of intelligence unknown in ancient Greece and Rome in the brightest periods of their history.

FINIS.

